Policy Paper

ARMENIAN SOCIAL MEDIA AND EU IMAGE: A RAPIDLY CHANGING TASK IN A SHIFTING LANDSCAPE OF DEMANDS

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Introduction

The process of creating a trustworthy and reliable EU image across the EU and its neighbourhoods has been significantly transformed in the 2020s. The creation and dissemination of the European Union's image, both within the EU and internationally, have been significantly influenced by various factors. These include reliance on central institutions such as DG COMM, EU-wide networks like Europe Centres and EU representations, and local multipliers such as influencers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Additionally, hybrid warfare, disinformation, as well as generational and technological changes have played a profound role in shaping this image. This is also true for the specific case of Armenia and the social media landscape, where an increasing number of news consumers form and express their opinion. Manufacturing and maintaining an EU image that is trustworthy and relatable to the majority of Armenian citizens is in this sense a work-intensive, rapidly changing and time-demanding task for communicators and actors in the field. This paper explores the nature of this work and how this is done on Armenian social media. Relying on anonymised expert interviews with policy experts, journalists and professionals involved in EU image communication both in Yerevan and Brussels, the paper will look into the structural preconditions and obstacles of the production of this image, and provide recommendations for future public engagement.

Background

Armenian news consumption is still relying heavily on established media outlets such as television, radio, and print newspapers. According to the research published by the International Republican Institute in Yerevan on June 2025, 23 %

of Armenia's population trust public service television.[1] Television remains the primary source of news for a large portion of the population, particularly among older audiences and in rural areas, where national broadcasters are seen as the most accessible and familiar channels for information.[2] Radio and print media are however steadily declining. Although print media consumption has never been this low since its existence in Armenia, established outlets of these formats still play a significant role in shaping public opinion and providing an interpretation of ongoing daily events.[3] Internews Network's 2024 research on freedom of speech and media consumption in Armenia reveals how Armenians access news and information across different platforms. Traditional television and online news websites remain the most used media outlets, accessed by 80% and 73% of respondents, respectively. However, consumption patterns show generational differences and platform shifts.[4]

In recent years, however, social media platforms have been steadily gaining importance in Armenia's media landscape.[5] Younger audiences increasingly turn to Facebook, YouTube, Telegram, and, more recently, TikTok for real-time updates, alternative viewpoints, and direct access to journalists and public figures. Many traditional media outlets have adapted by strengthening their online presence and actively distributing content through social networks. While traditional media

remains dominant, the growing influence of social media signals a gradual shift toward more diverse, digital-first news consumption habits.[6]

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[1] International Republican Institute, Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Armenia, June 2025, July 21, 2025, International Republican Institute, accessed January 27, 2026, https://www.iri.org/resources/public-opinion-survey-residents-of-armenia-june-2025
[2] Tigranuhi Martirosyan: What Is Read, Listened To, And Watched In Armenia – Survey Insights. https://media.am/en/newsroom/2024/10/31/40883/
[3] Media Consumption in Armenia https://armenia.mom-gmr.org/en/context/media-consumption
[4] Media Ownership Monitor – Armenia, "Media Consumption," accessed November 20, 2025, https://armenia.mom-gmr.org/en/context/media-consumption/
[5] https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-armenia
[6] https://internews.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/FoE-and-Media-Consumption_Final-Report-1.pdf

On the EU communication level, the interviews confirmed that the 2020s marked a definite departure from legacy media and public statements, introducing a new era in which another kind of tempo and creativity is in demand. This is also reflected in the use of digital outlets, news apps and social media, where communication teams – such as the ones connected to Armenia and the Southern Caucasus – prioritise the swift and flexible formats of social media over traditional outlets.

This shift is global and it is not specific to Armenia. It is also recorded in the annual Reuters Digital News Report, where social media platforms now constitute the primary source for around 52–60% of news consumers in the EU, while television and radio broadcasters continue to decline yearly, with social media overtaking traditional outlets as the main source of news for adults under 35.[7] In Central and Eastern Europe, this trend is particularly steep. In addition, trust in traditional outlets is consistently low, with news consumers often choosing social media over curated interpretations of events.[8] With such a decline in appointment-based media, and with linear television schedules and printed press losing routine audiences, it is the algorithms not editors, who deliver content through feeds.[9] The credibility of images, including that of the EU, is increasingly determined by visibility and virality, not editorial authority. Therefore, what we are witnessing is, in several aspects, a structural inversion, where traditional media still sets the agenda. However, social media decisively shapes the perception of that agenda not only through the input and circulation of images and narratives, but also through the manipulation of the algorithm.[10]

[7] https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-06/RISJ_DNR_2024_Digital_v10%20lr.pdf
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Mareš, M., & Havlík, V. (2022). Misinformation and perception of the EU in Central Europe. Communications: European Journal of Communication Research, 47(3), 345–365.

EU efforts to produce an image of itself

During the 2020s, the preconditions for reliable EU image production, distribution and consumption have changed in almost all aspects. Digitalisation, generational consumption habits, calls for a more integrated EU, and the conservative backlash show that messaging needs to occur via other technologies, to other types of consumers, about another kind of EU. Interviewees confirmed that the EU intensified its efforts in recent years to promote a coherent and reliable image through coordinated visibility campaigns and public diplomacy initiatives.

This renewed emphasis emerged in response to a decade marked by crises, as well as the economic and energy security shocks following the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, but also in response to the lessons learned from Brexit. Institutions such as DG COMM and EEAS increasingly sought to reframe the EU not merely as a bureaucratic structure but as a protector of common values and tangible benefits.[11] Campaigns like "NextGenerationEU"[12] or "EU for You"[13] in Serbia and "EU for Georgia"[14] in the neighbourhoods exemplified a strategic shift from policy explanations toward values, storytelling and the highlighting of human-scale examples of solidarity, pluralism and security. This also resulted in a dispersion of various local topics across the EU and the candidate countries, enabling the combination of evidence-based messaging with human stories and emotions, with content and campaigns reaching 31 million people in 2023[15] and 35.4 million in 2024.[16]

However, communicating a coherent image of the EU is also a challenge, as this image is contradictory. Intensifying in the 2020s, but having its roots in the 2010s,

[11] https://commission.europa.eu/priorities-2024-2029/democracy-and-our-values_en
[12] https://next-generation-eu.europa.eu/index_en
[13] https://europa.rs/eu-for-you/?lang=en
[14] https://eu4georgia.eu/all-campaigns/
[15] https://europeanmovement.eu/publication-articles/european-movement-international-in-2023
[16] https://europeanmovement.eu/publication-articles/the-european-movement-international-in-2024/

the debate between less and more integration, and ultimately forming the Patriots for Europe on one side and the mainstream European parties on the other reflects not only the radicalisation of views,[17] but also a discontinuity and cacophony in public communication.[18] Moves towards a more integrated EU and the conservative responses[19] to these developments expose institutional messaging to a process where the EU image itself is not stable and there is no consensus on what kind of EU the messaging should convey. Several EU officials have concluded that such a lack of a coherent vision prevents uniform and effective messaging[20]. Conflicting understandings of the EU result in a chaotic image, burdened by narratives of a power weakened by internal conflict.[21] Moreover, the EU appears split between the messaging of the Commission and member state level, EU parties, and national parties. Creating a trustworthy image of the EU, which is itself in flux, is therefore a relatively new communication exercise, because Euroscepticism, differing views on integration and enlargement, and dissonant voices on foreign policy have rarely been topics before the 2020s. As one EU official had put it in an in interview under the condition that s/he will remain anonymous: "We had never had to explain inside the house, that you are in the house."

The EU's public diplomacy strategy in the 2020s also become more data-driven and decentralized. Recognising that one size does not fit all and that national audiences respond differently to European messaging, central institutions in Brussels encouraged the localisation of narratives through Europe Direct centres

[17] Benedek, István – Annamária Sebestyén. 2025. "Euroambivalent and Equivocal Euroscepticism: Two Shades of Strategic Ambiguity in the 2024 European Parliament Elections in Hungary." Czech Journal of Political Science 2 (2025): 190–221. https://czechpolsci.eu/article/view/41299

[18] Andrea Capati. 2024. "The discursive framing of European integration in EU-wide media: actors, narratives and policies following the Russian invasion of Ukraine" Comparative European Politics. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41295-024-00397-1

[19] https://op.europa.eu/webpub/com/general-report-2023/en/chapter9.html

[20] Interview with Tereza Šupová, European Affairs Communication Department, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Aravot Online, 14 October 2025.
Interview with Stephen Clark (European Parliament communication), Aravot Online, 13 October 2025.

[21] René Cuperus – Saskia Hollander: Beyond the EU enlargement paradox Optimising opportunities and minimising risks. Clingendael Report. March 2024.

and partnerships with local broadcasters, businesses, NGOs, and influencers. Referring to various topics, such as the Green Deal, digitalisation or resilience, several interviewees in Brussels confirmed that these multiplicators are highly engaging as they translate abstract processes into a language and imagery meaningful within each country's political culture.

Interviews with Czech and European Parliament communication officials echo this shift in focus: as one Czech government communicator noted, the task is not to idealise the EU but to clearly explain what it does and why in accessible language. EP staff emphasise that effective communication must combine trustworthy information with formats that speak to emotions and everyday experiences rather than abstract institutional messages[22].

In the 2020s the European Commission expanded its communication strategy by including social media channels even more to reach younger and digitally connected audiences, stating that effective communication requires "a mix of channels and media (traditional and new)" to reach citizens directly and counter misinformation in an increasingly digital environment.[23] Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, the EU expanded its presence across social media platforms, with an aim to explain policy initiatives, promote European values, and engage younger generations.[24] Social media platforms play an increasingly important role. For example, the #TheFutureIsYours, #EUandME and #StandWithUkraine campaigns specifically targeted younger demographics on social media. However, this reflected not only a strategic adaptation to the hybrid media environment, but also a departure from traditional press releases and a

[22] Interview with Tereza Šupová, European Affairs Communication Department, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Aravot Online, 14 October 2025.
Interview with Stephen Clark (European Parliament communication), Aravot Online, 13 October 2025.
[23] Strategic Plan 2020-2024. DG COMMUNICATION.
https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/a5fd3b18-1373-4724-bd6e-23a6e13c0b17_en?filename=comm_sp_2020_2024_en.pdf
[24] Ibid.

reliance on legacy media, which were already outdated before the COVID 19 pandemic and were becoming less and less effective compared to algorithm-driven content.[25]

Lastly, one of the most significant underlying challenges of EU communication is the lack of resources and human capacity. Several EU officials mentioned that the main problem in successfully disseminating an image of a reliable EU is the lack of time and the smallness of the teams. Although they rely heavily on local multiplicators, the initial phases of every communication effort emanate from the local EU headquarters in the respective countries. In hostile environments, where both domestic and foreign malign influences employ overpowering resources to spread disinformative images and narratives, most EU efforts are focused on countering these with fact-based and precise counteractions. However, countering this never-ending flood consumes an immense amount of capacity from teams, which are incomparably smaller than those producing malicious content. Countermeasures, such as pre-bunking or debunking usually take time. Moreover, although the goal of such communication is – as an EU official pointed out – "elegant professionalism" and not aggressive visibility, these efforts often come too little too late, despite the immense work these delegations and representations invest in them.

[25] Batista Cabanas, Leticia. 2025. "Young Europeans Face Rising Threat from Misinformation as Social Media Becomes Main News Source." Euronews, February 19, 2025. https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/02/19/young-europeans-face-rising-threat-from-misinformation-as-social-media-becomes-main-news-s

The EU image on Armenian social media

Since the 2010s, Armenia's relationship with the European Union has undergone a profound transformation. In the 2020s public attitudes toward the EU have become even more positive, reflecting a growing desire for closer integration with Brussels.[26] Accordingly, policy decisions and communication efforts went hand in hand. In March 2024, the European Parliament adopted a resolution confirming that Armenia met the Maastricht Treaty Article 49 requirements[27]. This decision, alongside ongoing dialogue on visa liberalisation and the EU's €270 million Resilience and Growth Package, generated unprecedented interest in EU-Armenia relations. Public opinion reflects this enthusiasm: according to a 2023 International Republican Institute (IRI) poll, 86% of Armenians expressed satisfaction with their country's relationship with the EU, while only 50% maintained a favourable view of Russia, which is a dramatic reversal of attitudes compared to the immediate post-socialist period and the 2000s.[28]

However, these developments have also introduced new risks. As Armenia's political orientation gradually shifted westward, other external actors intensified their hybrid and information warfare efforts.[29] pro-Russian and pro-Azerbaijani media and social media channels, many of which operate in Russian, have launched coordinated campaigns portraying EU engagement as an instrument of geopolitical manipulation, cultural domination, or economic dependency.[30] The EU Monitoring Mission in Armenia has been a frequent target of such narratives, often described in disinformation campaigns as a Western intelligence operation

[26] Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Armenia. International Republican Institute Armenia, 2024 September.
[27] European Commission / DG COMM, communication campaign reporting on "NextGenerationEU", "EU for You", "EU for Georgia" (campaign reach 31 million in 2023 and 35.4 million in 2024).
[28] International Republican Institute. 2024. Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Armenia, December 2023. March 11, 2024. International Republican Institute. https://www.iri.org/resources/public-opinion-survey-residents-of-armenia-december-2023/
[29] Eto Buziashvili, Sopo Gelava, Givi Gigitashvili, Ani Mejlumyan, Victoria Olari: Information Warfare in the South Caucasus and Moldova. Atlantic Council. October 2024.
[30] Ibid.

or a neo-colonial project.[31] In turn, these attacks, disseminated primarily on social media not only discredit the broader idea of Armenia's European integration, but also taint the public image of the EU and disseminate Euroscepticism across the media landscape.

Several Armenian interviewees[32] pointed to the EU Monitoring Mission in Armenia (EUMA) as a recurring test case for competing narratives. On the ground, especially in Syunik and nearby regions, the EUMA is often associated with increased security and visible EU presence. At the same time, the Telegram ecosystem recycles storylines that frame the mission as a "provocation" or "foreign surveillance tool", pushing audiences toward a binary choice between "sovereignty" and "external control". This duality illustrates how the same EU action can generate both trust-building experiences and fear-based interpretations depending on who frames it first.

Public Journalism Club's May–September 2025 Telegram as a propaganda environment: analysis of narratives promoted by Russian language channels[33] research findings suggest that the most consequential attacks on the EU image are not limited to isolated 'fake news' items, but are produced as repeatable narrative packages that shape threat perception and identity-based alignment. In Armenia, these narratives circulate through Telegram-first ecosystems, then spill over into Meta/YouTube and sometimes professional media, creating a fast-moving "echo loop." Ahead of elections, this dynamic is especially polarising, within an already divided society in Armenia because the same narratives are used to sort audiences into "pro-Western vs pro-Russian" camps and to amplify fear and

[31] https://www.euractiv.com/news/russia-and-azerbaijan-take-aim-at-eus-mission-in-armenia/
[32] Author interviews with Armenian media and strategic communication experts and civil society stakeholders, Yerevan, 2025.
[33] Public Journalism Club, Telegram as a Propaganda Environment: Analysis of Russian-Language Channel Narratives about Armenia, Public Journalism Club (Armenia), accessed November 11, 2025, https://pjc.am/telegramy-orpes-qarozchakan-mijavayr-rusalezu-aliqneri-patumneri-verlutsutyun/

insecurity (PJC May–Sep). This implies that EU image-building is increasingly a distribution and responsiveness problem, not just a content problem.

This logic is consistent with wider EU-level findings on foreign information manipulation, such as the "Doppelgänger" clone-site operation, where look-alike websites and social posts recycled anti-EU and anti-Armenia narratives across multiple languages and platforms, with Telegram and other social channels serving as key amplifiers[34].

The implication is also methodological: Armenia's pre-election information risk is often driven by behaviours and networks (amplification patterns, cross-posting, coordinated timing), not only by individual false claims.[35] [36] This matters in Telegram-first ecosystems, where a small set of channels can set the agenda and where spillover into Facebook/YouTube can occur via screenshots, reposts, and influencer-style explainers. Interference operations increasingly use AI-generated or algorithm-boosted content and paid/fake influencers, which can adapt quickly to local languages and news cycles. For Armenia, adding lightweight network analysis (what spreads where, by whom, and how fast) would improve prioritisation: teams can respond to "high-velocity" narratives first and avoid wasting capacity on low-impact noise.

[34] Media.am / Verified, "Doppelgänger: Information Campaign Against Armenia," 3 November 2025. media.am | People are the media | Doppelgänger. Information Campeign Against Armenia • media.am
[35] Deutsche Welle. 2025. "Russia's Disinformation Campaign in Armenia Gains Momentum." November 30, 2025. https://www.dw.com/en/russias-disinformation-campaign-in-armenia-gains-momentum/a-74868051
[36] Fact Investigation Platform. 2025. "Structure of Hybrid Warfare: Tools and Actors Revealed for the Armenian Audience in 2025." December 23, 2025. https://fip.am/en/45305

Risks in Armenia

Armenia's information environment is entering a higher-risk cycle ahead of the 2026 parliamentary elections, where manipulative narratives are designed less to persuade policy than to amplify fear, threat perceptions, and identity-based polarisation. Interviewees consistently described a "speed and reach" gap: adversarial narratives move faster, use more emotional framing, and concentrate distribution in Telegram-first ecosystems, while official responses arrive later and remain fragmented across actors and channels. Interview feedback also highlights a "practicality gap": audiences respond poorly to declarative messaging when it is not paired with clear "what changes for me" steps—especially on procedural EU themes (mobility, opportunities, eligibility) rather than ideology. In the pre-election window, this gap lowers the threshold for polarisation because emotionally framed narratives dominate the first exposure.

It was repeatedly described in the interviews that mobility and visas as a "relationship test" where communication failures quickly turn into reputational damage. Individual cases of delays or refusals, especially when procedures feel opaque, rapidly turn into emotionally charged stories on Telegram and are reposted on Facebook or YouTube as "proof" of EU double standards. Even when consular decisions are legally sound, the absence of simple, proactive explanations in Armenian allows political actors and high-reach channels to frame these experiences as evidence of insincerity in the broader EU–Armenia partnership narrative.

A specific vulnerability concerns younger audiences. EU-related messages are often perceived as overly official and low-salience for everyday consumption, and despite overall positive attitudes toward EU–Armenia cooperation, the conducted (anonymised) interviews suggest lower support among youth, who rely more on social platforms than professional media and are more exposed to Telegram- and

TikTok-driven content flows[37]. TikTok and Telegram reward short, emotionally charged narratives and facilitate rapid cross-platform propagation (e.g. clips, screenshots, reposts). In such environments, EU messages compete not only with disinformation but also with the attention economics of short-form content. Youth-facing communication, therefore, requires a platform-first design and a deliberate shift away from "statement-style" messaging.

The EU image is also vulnerable to trust erosion through unmet expectations around mobility/visa-related perceptions, where unclear messaging can create disproportionate reputational costs. Several Armenian stakeholders describe mobility as the highest-salience "relationship test": optimism about European integration is quickly undermined when everyday experiences (delays, opacity, perceived unfairness) feel inconsistent with public narratives. This becomes politically salient because polarising actors can reframe individual frustration as evidence of EU insincerity or "double standards." As several EU communication officials pointed out in interviews, even technically correct decisions can be perceived as unfair if procedures are not explained proactively and in simple terms, creating a gap that political entrepreneurs and high-reach channels quickly fill. Telegram dynamics amplify this risk: single cases can be packaged into emotionally charged "evidence stories," and the correction window is short. A structured expectation-management approach – public-facing, consistent language on what is decided vs not decided, and where decisions sit – should be treated as a component of information resilience.

Language dynamics magnify the exposure risk. Armenian-language content remains critical not only for accessibility, but also because when appealing Armenian content is missing (or too formal), Armenian speakers may substitute

[37] Author interviews with Armenian media, civil society, strategic communication experts and policy stakeholders. All interviews were anonymised.

Russian-language sources, increasing their exposure to proxy narratives and imported framing.[38]

PJC's research[39] highlights four recurring risk mechanisms that make slow or fragmented public communication significantly more costly: (1) fear- and threat-based framing crowds out nuance and forces binary choices; (2) Telegram functions as an amplifier node, creating a persistent "unanswered claim" advantage; (3) information vacuums are quickly filled by high-reach channels, while later corrections struggle to catch up; and (4) as elections approach, polarisation accelerates and external influence intensifies, shrinking the rebuttal window and increasing susceptibility to foreign influence.

Diaspora networks can amplify EU-related messaging but are not a single vector: diaspora attitudes toward Armenia's domestic politics can shape orientations toward the EU, and some segments—even in Western countries—may reproduce pro-Russian frames. This can complicate message diffusion when diaspora influencers or community pages retransmit polarising interpretations. Several stakeholders also compared Armenia's pre-2026 environment to Moldova's recent experience, suggesting that tested counter-FIMI practices (rapid response coordination, platform escalation routines, and voter-period communication safeguards) could be adapted to Armenia with local tailoring.

[38] Vardanyan, Gegham. 2025. "Russian Information Channels in Armenia: From TV to Telegram." Media.am, October 22, 2025. https://media.am/en/critique/2025/10/22/43717/

[39] Public Journalism Club, Telegram as a Propaganda Environment: Analysis of Russian-Language Channel Narratives about Armenia, Public Journalism Club (Armenia), accessed November 11, 2025, https://pjc.am/telegramy-orpes-qarozchakan-mijavayr-rusalezu-aliqneri-patumneri-verlutsutyun/

Conclusion

The Armenian case illustrates how profoundly the task of building a trustworthy EU image has changed since the 2020s. While public support for closer EU–Armenia relations is historically high, the information environment in which this image is formed has become faster, more fragmented, and more adversarial. Social media—especially Telegram-first ecosystems—now plays a decisive role in shaping perceptions, rewarding speed, emotional framing, and networked amplification over accuracy or institutional authority. In this context, EU communication is no longer only a question of message quality, but also of distribution, responsiveness, and expectation management.

The findings show that even well-received EU actions, such as the Monitoring Mission or mobility-related initiatives, can be rapidly reframed through coordinated narratives that exploit information vacuums and procedural complexity. As Armenia approaches the 2026 elections, these dynamics are likely to intensify, with youth audiences and visa-related expectations emerging as vulnerabilities. To remain credible and resilient, EU communication must become more platform-native, language-sensitive, and anticipatory, combining clear explanations of practical outcomes with rapid responses to high-velocity narratives that are often false. Ultimately, sustaining a positive EU image in Armenia will depend on the EU's ability to match adversarial speed with clarity, consistency, and locally grounded engagement in an increasingly contested and polarised digital public sphere.

Recommendations

In Armenia's pre-election environment, strategic and crisis communication is no longer a reputational add-on but a resilience requirement: without timely, platform-native messaging and a coordinated response, "speed and reach" asymmetries will continue to advantage manipulative, fear-based narratives.

- Adopt a two-tier response model to close the speed gap without sacrificing accuracy. Tier 1 (hours) publishes short Armenian-language clarifications ("what we know / what we don't know yet / where to check updates") and links to a single "living explainer" page that is continuously updated. Tier 2 (days) publishes full rebuttals and context pieces, including sources and longer format explanations. This structure reduces the information vacuums that Telegram-first channels exploit, preserves credibility, and is realistic under small-team constraints—especially during high-velocity pre-election cycles.

- Address the "format and language" mismatch. EU-related messages are often perceived as overly official and low-salience for everyday consumption, reducing their reach among undecided groups and younger audiences. Armenian-language content is essential for credibility and scale, and cooperation with local creators can improve accessibility and relevance of the content.

- Create a lightweight EU Armenia communications coordination mechanism (monthly calendar + weekly short sync during spikes + shared Q&A/asset library + crisis trigger list), chaired by the EU Delegation with Member State embassies and key implementers. This aims to reduce fragmentation and accelerate consistent Armenian-language clarification across channels.

- Close the Telegram gap with a minimum viable model focused on reducing the "unanswered claim" advantage rather than "winning Telegram." Maintain an official Telegram channel that posts short Armenian clarifications linked to longer

explainers, publish a standing weekly Q&A ("myths/questions of the week"), and build a small relay network (civil society, independent media, regional pages) that can repost clarifications quickly.

- Formalise escalation workflows with major platforms to limit spillovers and amplification. Given Telegram's limited responsiveness, the practical leverage point is often Meta, YouTube and X, where reporting and enforcement pathways are clearer. Establish named liaison points (EU Delegation/embassies + a civil society partner), define standard evidence packs (URLs, screenshots, timestamps, reach signals, and cross-posting patterns), and run rapid reporting routines during high-risk periods. Where relevant, prioritise actions that reduce algorithmic amplification and paid distribution of demonstrably manipulative content rather than attempting wholesale takedowns. This makes the response more consistent, auditable, and feasible under small-team conditions.

- Move from ad-hoc influencer spending to a creator compact approach: select a small, politically diverse cohort of Armenian-language creators (including regional voices) and co-produce platform-native explainers with clear integrity safeguards (verified facts, source access, rapid correction norms), allowing constructive criticism to preserve credibility. Complement this with a "digital ambassador" function focused on platform liaison and escalation—helping partners navigate reporting and crisis coordination with major platforms.

- Introduce an Expectation Management Protocol for mobility/visa issues that is reused across the Delegation, embassies, and implementers: separate political dialogue from operational reality; provide simple "how it works" steps and timelines; publish a consistent "what we can't influence" disclaimer; and add signposting (where to apply, common refusal reasons, appeal options, fraud warnings). Include a rapid-response clause for viral "visa scandal" claims circulating on Telegram.

- Add TikTok as an explicit youth channel: pilot a short video series (30–60 seconds) explaining EU processes (mobility, EUMA, funding) using Armenian creators, with repost-friendly variants for Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts.

- Upgrade professional media usability and reduce the risk of imported frames. Co-produce broadcast-ready EU explainers and local case stories (short packages with visuals) for TV and major online outlets, and introduce a simple "footage integrity" checklist to reduce the inadvertent import of edited Russian framing when using third-party video materials. Pair this with a newsroom-facing rapid Q&A line during spikes to prevent the repetition of unverified claims.

- Complement media literacy interventions with short simulations: these activities demonstrate manipulation mechanics (how an unverified claim travels from Telegram to Facebook/YouTube and into commentary shows). Simulations should generate reusable public outputs: short videos, infographics, and verification checklists in Armenian that can be deployed during fast-moving cycles. Experience from Czech and EP practice suggests that such efforts work best when embedded in engaging formats—quizzes, ambassador schools, creator-led explainers—rather than one-off lectures or generic warnings

- Reduce over-reliance on reactive debunking by pairing rebuttal with proactive "positive utility" content—explaining the EU's structure, roles, and tangible pathways for engagement—so that the EU image is built not only by countering falsehoods but also by providing an accessible understanding of what the EU is and how EU–Armenia cooperation works.

- Shift support instruments toward multi-year capacity and integrity safeguards. Expand multi-year institutional support for interventions in the education sector, fact-checking, watchdog journalism and regional creators (not only project micro-grants), paired with transparency safeguards (ownership/affiliation disclosure, corrections policy, conflict-of-interest rules) to

reduce the risk of inadvertently resourcing proxy or anti-democratic ecosystems and to sustain monitoring beyond election cycles.

This shifts EU communication from predominantly reactive rebuttals toward practical, accessible understanding—reducing the space in which manipulative narratives set the terms of the debate.

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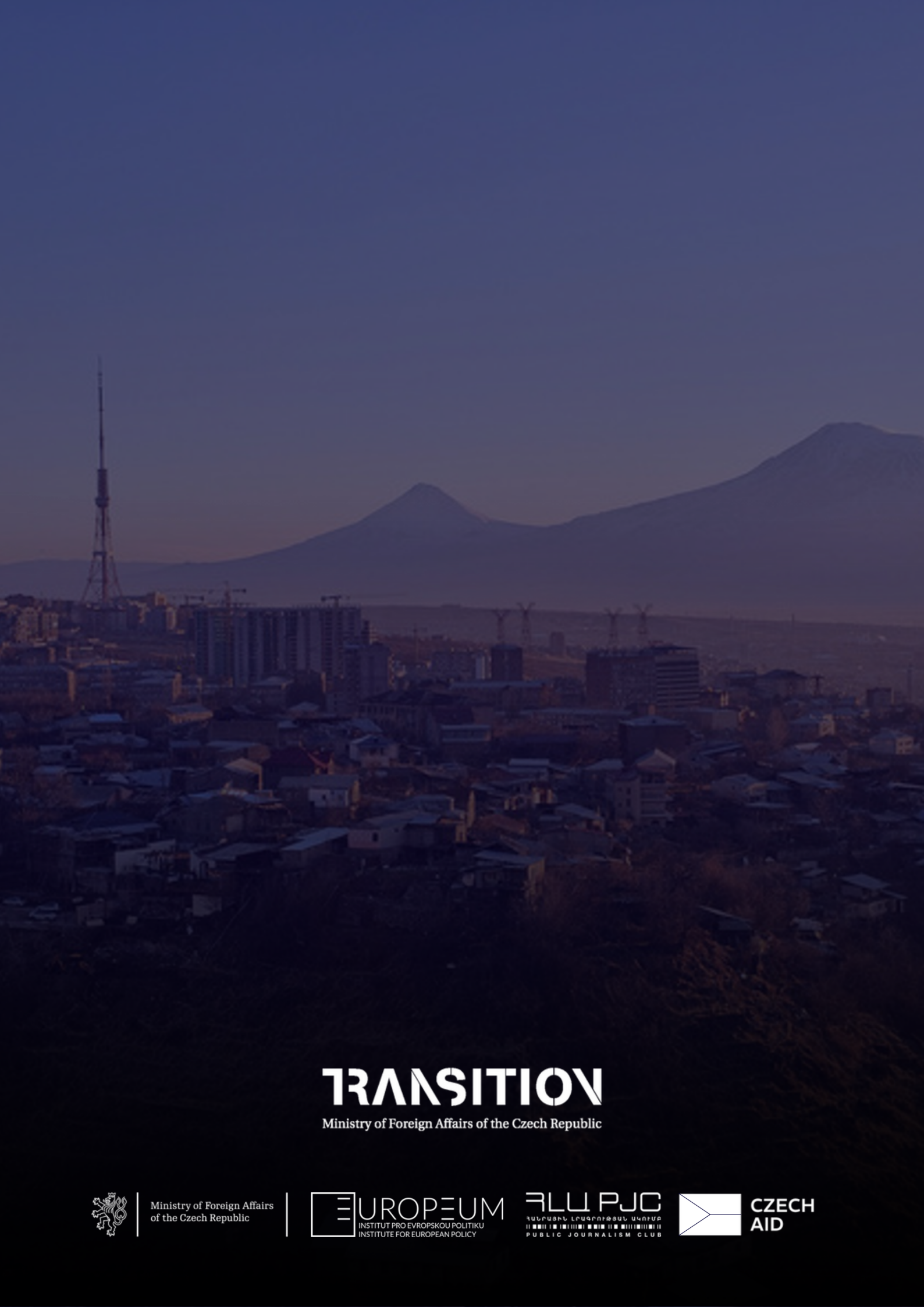

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