DW Akademie

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Evaluation Report 2025 • Executive Summary

Georgia and Moldova

Strengthening independent media, promoting constructive journalism and advancing Media and Information Literacy



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Background

The media landscape in Georgia and Moldova is marked by increasing political pressure, economic instability, and mounting challenges for independent journalism. In Georgia, government restrictions on media freedoms, including the controversial "Foreign Influence" law, have significantly impacted independent media outlets, contributing to self-censorship and limiting public access to diverse information. In both Georgia and Moldova, the media sector has faced financial strain following the suspension of US foreign aid, including USAID funding, in January 2025—a decision that affected numerous countries worldwide. This reduction in financial support has compounded economic hardships, particularly in Moldova, where migration and declining advertising revenues have further weakened the media sector. Both countries have also faced growing challenges from disinformation campaigns, which have intensified during politically sensitive periods.

DW Akademie's projects aimed to strengthen media literacy, promote constructive journalism, and enhance the capacity of independent media organizations. The projects supported minority-language media outlets, mentored emerging journalists, and provided comprehensive training programs for educators and content creators. The evaluation assessed the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability following the OECD/DAC criteria. Data collection methods included surveys, key informant interviews (KIIs), and document reviews conducted between January and March 2025.

Evaluation results

Georgia

The evaluation assessed the DW Akademie project in Georgia across the OECD/DAC criteria, with a particular focus on relevance and effectiveness. It examined the project's alignment with the needs of target groups in Media and Journalism Education (MJE) and Media Viability (MV), as well as its efforts to counter the spread of (Russian) mis- and disinformation. The findings confirmed that the project successfully achieved its objectives while navigating a challenging political environment.

Relevance

The project effectively addressed Georgia's key media challenges, aligning well with the objectives of DW Akademie, BMZ, and local partners. By strategically supporting independent regional media, the project ensured that underserved populations, including minority communities in the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions, gained access to relevant and accurate information. The inclusion of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) initiatives and fact-checking programs successfully equipped journalists and students with the skills necessary to counter disinformation. The project's focus on constructive journalism further empowered local media outlets to produce solution-based content that resonates with marginalized communities. The assessment of the relevance criterion is "comprehensively fulfilled."

Coherence

The project demonstrated strong internal coherence between its project lines, particularly in connecting fact-checking workshops, constructive journalism, and the mentorship program. DW Akademie ensured strategic alignment with other international donors such as USAID and Internews to minimize duplication and enhance collective impact. The partnership with GIPA provided an effective mentorship model, offering tailored guidance to media outlets and interns. While some regional media actors were less engaged due to financial struggles, the project remained well-positioned in Georgia's media development landscape. The assessment of the coherence criterion is "comprehensively fulfilled."

Effectiveness

The project successfully enhanced media literacy, empowered journalists, and strengthened regional media outlets. Achievements include hundreds of multimedia stories

and several media outlets, such as Radio Marneuli, significantly improving their digital presence. The mentorship and internship program demonstrated significant success in equipping interns with practical skills, with some gaining employment in Georgia's media sector. Despite this, challenges persisted in ensuring trained professionals remained active in journalism due to low salaries and limited career opportunities in the field. The assessment of the effectiveness criterion is "overall fulfilled."

Efficiency

Despite a budget reduction since the previous project cycle, the project successfully maintained key activities such as mentoring, workshops, and content production. DW Akademie adapted effectively by reallocating resources to sustain vital project components. However, some partners experienced administrative delays in payments and found DW Akademie's financial reporting system complex and demanding. Expanding in-person mentorship and simplifying administrative processes were identified as opportunities for improved efficiency. The assessment of the efficiency criterion is "overall fulfilled."

Impact

The project significantly strengthened independent media in Georgia, particularly in marginalized communities. Media outlets like Chai Khana gained international recognition, while investigative reporting influenced public discourse and prompted policy discussions. Participants gained practical skills that improved their media content, including increased social media engagement and improved storytelling formats. While the project achieved considerable impact, some partners reported ongoing risks due to the challenging political environment, including intimidation and harassment. The assessment of the impact criterion is "overall fulfilled."

Sustainability

Although some partners, like Chai Khana and Radio Marneuli, are committed to making project activities sustainable, smaller media outlets remain highly dependent on donor funding. The mentorship program and fact-checking initiatives have demonstrated potential for continued success but require additional support to ensure lasting impact. Challenges such as financial instability, staff turnover, and political uncertainty pose risks to sustainability. Expanding financial training, strengthening regional networks, and enhancing resource mobilization strategies were identified as key steps to improve sustainability. The assessment of the sustainability criterion is "partially fulfilled."

Moldova

The evaluation assessed the DW Akademie project in Moldova across the OECD/DAC criteria, analyzing its performance in supporting independent media, building professional journalism capacity, and integrating MIL into Moldova's education system.

Relevance

The project successfully addressed Moldova's media sector needs by integrating MIL into core school subjects, supporting independent media outlets, and fostering critical thinking skills that indirectly contribute to combating disinformation. The inclusion of podcasting and AI training provided participants with innovative tools to enhance media production. The project's alignment with Moldova's national education strategy and cooperation with the Ministry of Education significantly increased its impact and ensured long-term institutional engagement. The assessment of the relevance criterion is "comprehensively fulfilled."

Coherence

The project demonstrated strong coherence with Moldova's media development strategies and ensured coordination with local and international stakeholders. DW Akademie engaged with key actors like Internews and IWPR to minimize duplication and align efforts aimed at fostering independent and critical thinking skills. DW Akademie's collaboration with the Ministry of Education further improved coherence, ensuring that MIL was formally embedded in Moldova's educational frameworks through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that outlines the fields of cooperation in the project work. Additionally, the integrative MIL approach—and thus this project—is included in the Interministerial Plan, where the MIL action plans of respective ministries, CSOs, and international donors are presented. The assessment of the coherence criterion is "overall fulfilled."

Effectiveness

The project effectively introduced MIL into Romanian language classes for 6th grade students and English language classes for 10th grade students, filling a critical educational gap. By training 20 teachers from 11 schools in the first year and expanding to 21 teachers in 11 schools in the second year, reaching hundreds of students, the project successfully promoted critical thinking and improved students' ability to detect disinformation, particularly in Romanian and English language classes. Additionally, a workshop on

the integrative MIL approach was conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, targeting 70 Romanian language teachers and school inspectors from every district of the country, further enhancing the reach and impact of the project. The Moldova School of Journalism's (MSJ) organizational development significantly improved its capacity to deliver trainee-centered trainings, including podcasting and digital storytelling initiatives. Although the AI course initially struggled with low engagement, DW Akademie adapted by modifying the course structure to better meet participant needs. The assessment of the coherence criterion is "overall fulfilled."

Efficiency

The project demonstrated good efficiency in maximizing impact despite limited resources. DW Akademie effectively combined local expertise with international trainers, reducing costs while ensuring high-quality delivery. The structured approach to partner engagement and mentorship improved efficiency, while effective budget management enabled the continuation of core activities despite economic challenges. While participants praised DW Akademie's ability to manage resources efficiently, some partners expressed concerns about the complexity of financial reporting procedures and administrative delays. The assessment of the efficiency criterion is "comprehensively fulfilled."

Impact

The project achieved significant impact by influencing educational policy and strengthening Moldova's media ecosystem. The Ministry of Education's decision to integrate MIL principles into national curricula reflects the project's lasting influence. The Podcasting Festival successfully introduced podcasting as a new way to tell stories, and MSJ's improved capacity provided ongoing support for aspiring journalists. Positive unintended outcomes included the Ministry of Education's request for additional teacher training and the emergence of a vibrant podcasting community. While many participants continued to apply their skills, concerns about the long-term sustainability of podcasting without additional funding remain. The assessment of the impact criterion is "overall fulfilled."

Sustainability

The project demonstrated encouraging signs of sustainability through institutional integration and teacher-led MIL efforts. However, maintaining podcasting networks and MIL expansion efforts will require continued financial support. The Moldova School of Journalism's strengthened capacity and the Ministry of Education's endorsement of MIL provide a strong foundation for sustainability, yet financial uncertainty may undermine these gains. Expanding teacher networks, securing co-funding opportunities, and developing digital learning platforms were identified as crucial steps to ensure sustainability. The assessment of the sustainability criterion is "overall fulfilled."

In conclusion, the DW Akademie project effectively supported independent media and strengthened media literacy in Georgia and Moldova. The project's adaptability, focus on underserved regions, and commitment to skill-building positioned it as a vital contributor to media resilience in both countries. Sustaining these gains will require strategic investments in financial stability, mentorship, and regional collaboration.

Selected lessons learned

1. Flexible design ensures resilience: The project's ability to adapt to changing political conditions in Georgia and Moldova ensured continuity despite unexpected challenges.

2. Mentorship is crucial: The mentoring model significantly enhanced skills development and strengthened media partners' capacities in both countries—in Moldova, through mentors supporting schoolteachers in MIL, and in Georgia, through mentorship programs focused on strengthening media organizations and regional outlets.

3. Tailored media literacy approaches: Integrating MIL into various subjects ensured wider coverage and improved engagement in Moldova.

4. Regional collaboration is key: While no formal cross-border collaborations took place during the current project cycle, both Georgian and Moldovan partners expressed strong interest in future regional and international cooperation, highlighting its value for knowledge sharing and innovation. Combine local and international expertise: The use of local trainers in tandem with international experts improved both cost-efficiency and the contextual relevance of project activities.

Selected recommendations

1. Strengthen financial and operational stability for regional media: Provide comprehensive training in fundraising, grant writing, and content monetization strategies to improve financial resilience. Equip regional media outlets with alternative revenue strategies to diversify income sources. Streamline reporting and financial procedures to reduce administrative burdens on smaller media organizations.

2. Expand and enhance capacity-building initiatives: Extend mentorship programs beyond six months to foster long-term skills development in digital storytelling, investigative journalism, and content creation. Expand AI-focused training not only as a response to digital challenges but also as a tool to improve news delivery, content monetization, and social media strategy development. Equip journalists and media outlets with AI tools for efficient newsroom practices, such as video transcription, fact-checking, and automated content generation. Strengthen digital media skills by offering additional training in social media marketing, video editing, and content adaptation to increase audience engagement.

3. Deepen MIL integration: Continue working with the Ministry of Education in Moldova to expand MIL integration across multiple subjects, ensuring students beyond major cities are reached. Consider introducing MIL content into general education and preschool curricula to foster early critical thinking skills. Develop a Digital Resource Platform to centralize MIL materials, teaching resources, verified facts, and disinformation case studies, ensuring accessibility for educators, journalists, and the public.

4. Bolster media security and advocacy efforts: Provide security training for journalists to manage risks in politically volatile environments, ensuring their safety in the face of growing political pressures. Engage in targeted advocacy initiatives in Georgia, particularly in response to increasing governmental restrictions on independent media operations.

5. Foster regional collaboration and innovation: Fostering cross-border partnerships between media organizations in Georgia and Moldova to facilitate knowledge exchange and joint initiatives. Encourage the creation of collaborative projects and shared content production to amplify regional media impact. Support networking opportunities that enable journalists from diverse backgrounds to connect, exchange ideas, and develop innovative storytelling approaches.

DW Akademie

is Deutsche Welle's center for international media development, journalism training and knowledge transfer. Our projects strengthen the human right to freedom of expression and unhindered access to information. DW Akademie empowers people worldwide to make independent decisions based on reliable facts and constructive dialogue.

DW Akademie is a strategic partner of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. We also receive funding from the Federal Foreign Office and the European Union and are active in around 60 developing countries and emerging economies.

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The objective of the external evaluation is to provide a constructive assessment of the project results. It does not necessarily align with the perspective and planning of DW Akademie. Nevertheless, all findings were discussed in order to allow lessons learned to be incorporated into the development of future strategies.