

Searching for new
solutions to emerging
trends that endanger
political finance
integrity

Civil society actors

*to emerging
trends that
endanger
political
finance
integrity*

Two areas:

Involvement of civil society on money in
politics

- civil
society

Engagement between civil society and other
stakeholders

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Two areas:

Involvement of civil society on money in politics

1. *What are the most effective methodologies in monitoring political finance to meet existing challenges and new trends?*
2. *How can civil society groups raise their expertise in monitoring political finance, and attract and retain the right people for this work?*

Engagement between civil society and other stakeholders

3. *What are the key stakeholders with which civil society should seek engagement in improving transparency and control over money in politics?*
4. *How can civil society better engage with government agencies, public oversight agencies, and political parties?*

TO DISCUSS: What are the most effective methodologies in monitoring political finance to meet existing

Challenges:

- challenges and new trends?*
- 1) **Access to information is difficult for different reasons.** Ambiguous laws (Armenia), parties don't report names of contributors, crypto is opaque, some public agencies refuse requests or fail to respond to findings and violations (Georgia), lack of availability on data about donations and/or non electronic, analyzable format (Moldova) - "searchability" and "accessibility" is fundamental to oversight. Databases are some time under developed. (procurement challenges - private companies charging fees for data analysis, making EMBs reliant. Not sustainable.
 - 2) **Independence of Government Institutions.** Anticorruption chairman appointed by PM and doesn't have investigative powers (Georgia),
 - 3) **Under-resourced Institutions**
 - 4) **Social media monitoring is difficult:** political ad disclosure is not consistent across platforms. Lackluster engagement by tech platforms; Bots/Trolls are paid but difficult to track; Meta's Crowdtangle monitoring tool is going away. Unclear what the replacement is...though Meta is the most advanced in transparent political ad policies.

Effective methodologies:

- 1) CSOs have developed approaches to address lack of searchable files but it's time intensive.
- 2) In the absence of accessible/searchable data, CSOs may investigate parties' social media pages (Ukraine) and apply broadcast media monitoring approaches to Telegram channels for example.
- 3) Contexts where FOIA requests apply to political parties (Armenia) (North Macedonia) may advance accountability
- 4) Day to day monitoring.
- 5) Utilizing software and platforms administrated by CSOs for tracking.
- 6) Examining broad data points e.g. articles by investigative journalists

Model Solutions:

Model 1: Portal where parties provide the data and managed by an EMB institution and then the EMB

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TO DISCUSS: How can civil society groups raise their expertise in monitoring political finance, and attract and retain the right people for this work?

- Combination of data and computer science skills are needed as well as qualitative analysis and analytical writing. Specifically, writing and critical thinking skills, and logical analysis.
- Working with journalists and building internal investigative skills
- Recruiting university students eager to learn.
- Cultivating impartial democracy activists e.g. democracy university is an effective recruitment mechanism
- Consistent approaches to advocacy. Maintaining human resources to maintain momentum.
- Timing is important in terms of political will and impact
- Being able to tell stories that are important to the general public e.g. political corruption human interest stories.

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Building coalitions to improve collaboration among partners in civil society and the private sector, government institutions (in state). Building transnational coalitions to optimize advocacy.

TO DISCUSS: Who are the key stakeholders with which civil society should seek engagement in improving transparency and control over money in politics?

- International actors focused on election integrity. Europe actors preferred.
- Smaller political parties can be important allies to advocate for change because they stand to benefit politically. But commitments from opposition parties are key to holding opposition parties accountable once they gain office.
- Inter agency authorities. Increased cooperation is needed among EMB, other agencies e.g. ombudsman, tax authorities
- Private and public broadcast media can be a partner to help tell the story of political financing e.g. frame it for human interest.
- Published media (private companies) need improved engagement mechanisms. May be difficult to tell whether parties are getting equal rates or if some parties receive advertising preference (cost or time)
- Police authorities. Can be allies to investigate and prosecute finance offenses if it's within their mandate.

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Institutional Stakeholder engagement—good practices, defining roles, information exchange, models of engagement that can be replicated or scaled. Coordination mechanisms between political parties, political finance oversight agencies and other institutions.

TO DISCUSS: How can civil society better engage with government agencies, public oversight agencies, and political parties?

Effective Examples:

- Form a coalition and create a process to maximize results
- Form bespoke coalitions that focus on specific cases may be necessary to achieve change.
- Make personal connections/strengthen relationships across sectors with parties, business sector, parliaments, interlocutors in other government agencies with whom you have personal connections.
- Formalizing frameworks for engagement.
- Balance is important to avoid conflation of groups with government authorities.
- Understanding incentives for parties to engage with CSOs for example a desire for information on consumer media habits to improve electoral outcomes e.g where do voters get their information?

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Engagement with the Private Sector - big tech, AI governance, voluntary commitments (are they effective?), operationalizing voluntary commitments for big tech. How can civil society better engage with the private sector? Is big tech disclosing enough?
How can we push for more uniform practices?

TO DISCUSS: How can civil society best engage with private actors, and what (if any) role can voluntary commitments play in this engagement?

- Skepticism of private sector engagement. Perceived as not reliable
- Need to have something to offer the private sector. What are their incentives to cooperate?
- Need find something to offer private media platforms for example, that motivates them to cooperate?
- EU integration will help with some issues governing campaign expenditures on media platforms e.g. GSA
- Collaborating with media monitoring organizations to monitor broadcast advertisement frequency is potentially helpful but problematic because of different value systems or some may be involved in undesirable business practices. e.g. Neilson monitoring for commercial interests.

**Notably: sometimes it's productive not to engage. It may be advantageous to