



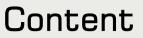
Media and Communication Educational and Research Center

Media and Communication Educational and Research Center (MCERC)

Annual Report 2021







Chairwoman's address	
About Center	
Activities 2021	
Our partners	
Our Team	



Address by the Center's Chairwoman

Media and Communication Educational and Research Center has been active for six years now and the values that have united us as a team for all these years are crucial to each individual member. Media and education are cornerstone of democracy and we recognize that it is particularly important to strive for a healthier media environment and to support education, since they play a significant role in the quality of democracy.

For a fragile democracy such as Georgia, 2021 turned out to be a good indicator of the dangers present in the media environment. The events of July 5-6 (when dozens of journalists were harmed in the process of demonstration coverage, with one operator losing his life), demonstrated that greater focus is needed on human rights protection and on creation of a solidary media environment. Hence, we have set new educational and research priorities in July 2021, amongst which were us contributing to defending fundamental rights and freedoms, working on improving journalist safety conditions and media environment, supporting girls and women's educations and equality etc.

2021 was a year of important changes for our organization. Our team was joined by young researchers, we have signed partnership memorandums, published research papers, including publications in internationally acclaimed journals. For these achievements we would like to thank our loyal supporters, donor organizations and partners with whom we have shared this interesting journey.

We expect many interesting projects and important changes ahead and we hope our center will contribute to the positive transitions in the country in regards to media democratization and most importantly, protection of human rights.

Sincerely,

frahand

About MCERC

"Media and Communication Educational and Research Center" is a Non-enterpreneurial (Non-commercial) Legal Entity, acting in accordance with the Constitution of Georgia, laws, and Charter. MCERC was founded in 2015. The supreme managing body of the center is a general meeting. The managing bodies of the center are Founders, General assembly, Administration / Governing Board, and Chair. The Chairwoman of the organization is Professor (TSU) Mariam Gersamia.

The center aims to support the enhancement of a media and mass-communication field in the manner of creation of the new knowledge and through educational-research activities, raise awareness in media literacy and support introduction and strengthening democratic values in a civil society. The center aims advising in the fields of media psychology, public relations, media and mass-communication, support to transfer interdisciplinary knowledge.

Our Mission is to educate and support journalists for empowering media and strengthening democracy.

Our Vision is to support professional media for a democratic society.

Our values:

- Say the truth
- Respect diversity
- Encourage creativity
- Focus on development
 - Build teamwork and trust

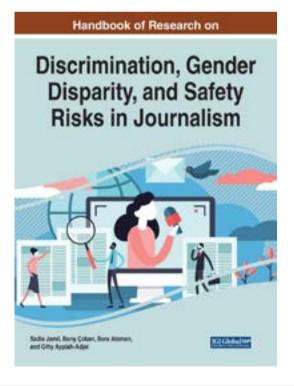






Research: The Voice of Women and Challenges of Gender Equality in Georgian Media (2021)¹

Authors: Dr. Mariam Gersamia, Dr. Maia Toradze, Liana Markariani



2021 year has begun with publishing a research conducted by MCERC team. This research analyzes the media landscape in Georgia from a gender equality perspective to identify the existing stereotypes dominant in Georgian media organizations. Georgia (country) faces challenges related to femicide, domestic violence, employment of women, early or forced marriages, sexual harassment, blackmailing of female journalists, and there is a lack of awareness regarding gender equality.

¹ https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-voice-of-women-and-challenges-of-gender-equality-in-georgian-media/267637

The study answers research questions:

What sociocultural context and basic psychological motivators drive females to choose journalism as a profession?

Is there any gender inequality regarding the workplace and positions in Georgian media (TV, print, radio, and online media) and if 'yes' how does it present?

Are there any predefined topics/themes covered specifically by the male or female journalists?

What gender-related stereotypes (if any) dominate/ take over in Georgian media?

Mcerc research (in cooperation and support with partner organizations) was published in book: Handbook of Research on Discrimination, Gender Disparity, and Safety Risks in Journalism, Chapter: XIII, Publisher: IGI Global, 2020, DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-6686-2.ch013



see more: https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-voice-of-women-and-challenges-of-gender-equality-in-georgian-media/267637

Webinar: International collaboration to promote safety of journalists and gender equality

Chairwoman of MCERC Mariam Gersamia as an international speaker participated on July 30 in the Report launch international webinar: Global project on Safety of Journalists, Sustainability and Gender Inclusiveness. Prof. Gersamia shared up-to-date information about the challenges of an unsafe media environment and fragile democracy in Georgia, she talked about recent developments in Georgia, about Lekso Lashkarava's (cameraman from Georgia) tragic death.

A total of 73 persons representing media, academia, media rights and research institutions from different countries attended the webinar. See more: https://bit.ly/3IW9cHn

International Media coverage "The Rising Nepal Daily": https://bit.ly/2VL2KrE

Online presentation

The first phase of the study: "Pre-election media environment: threats, expectations, recommendations"

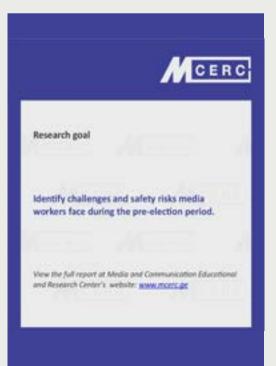
Media and Communication educational and Research Center (MCERC) conducted an online presentation of the survey "Pre-election media environment: threats, expectations, recommendation" on July 17. The webinar was attended by representatives of academia and wider public, students and journalists. A lively discussion moderated by Associated professor Maia Toradze followed the presentation. At the presentation, chairwoman of MCERC, and author of the study prof. Mariam Gersamia presented the main findings from the first phase of the research. Findings of the online-survey identified challenges and safety risks media workers face during the pre-election period and answers the questions as it follows:



While doing their job, how safe/unsafe media workers feel during pre-election period?

What kind of threats media workers expect and from which groups?

What should media do for ensuring media workers' safety?, etc.



The results reflect data collected between July 28-August 4, through an online survey. The sample (183 respondents from 56 media outlets – 18 regional media included) contains journalists/reporters, editors, and producers, media managers, media owners, cameraperson, bloggers etc.



According to the survey, 78 % of media workers say, that media environment has worsened in 2021 compared to 2020.



View the full report at Media and Communication Educational and Research Center's website: www.moerc.ge



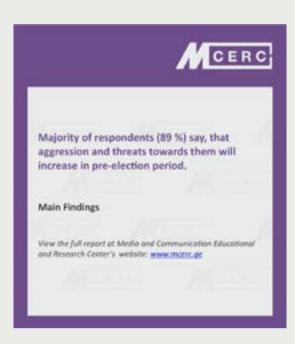
Majority of media workers (85 %) expect verbal and/or physical violence against them during the pre-election period.

Main Findings

View the full report at Media and Communication Educational and Research Center's website: www.mcerc.ge

Main findings of the survey:

- According to the survey, 78 % of media workers say, that media environment has worsened in 2021 compared to 2020. Only 3.2 % say it has been improved and 13.6 % says - it has not been changed.
- While assessing the pre-election media environment, 63 % of respondents say media employees are very or mostly unsafe. Only 8.2 % says, they are very or mostly safe;



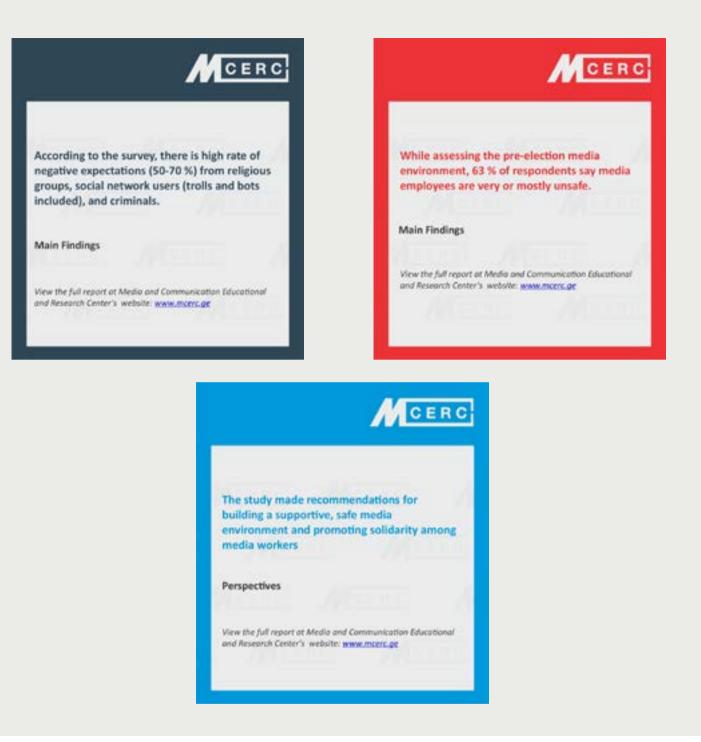
• Majority of respondents (89 %) say, that aggression and threats towards them will increase in pre-election period. 11 % says they 'do not know' and no one says that aggression and threats will NOT increase.

• Majority of media workers (85 %) expect verbal and/or physical violence against them during the pre-election period. However, Other forms of direct and indirect violence (e.g., constant accusations/blaming, spreading rumors, discrimination, blackmail, persistent impairment and ridicule, etc.) are also mentioned in more than 40 % of the answers.

According to the survey, 83 % expect such threats from anti-Western groups and 79 % - from the government. There is high rate of negative expectations (50-70 %) from religious groups, social network users (trolls and bots included), and criminals.



Respondents expressed their opinion on safety tools, which media organizations can provide for ensuring media safety during crisis. For ensuring media safety, majority of respondents (74 %) think, that media representatives should cooperate with local and international organizations more closely. For 70 % of respondents, additional tool for safety is providing with timely legal support to victims, as well as expressing support and solidarity to critical media and journalists more promptly (69 %), reduce media coverage to aggressive groups (64 %), identify them on social networks (59 %), conduct trainings on safety issues: covering crisis and demonstrations (39%), providing timely psychological support to victims (32%), etc.



The study made recommendations for building a supportive, safe media environment, enhancing coordination and promoting solidarity among media workers (during the crisis period and afterwards).

Survey has been conducted in frame of the project "SAFE Media". The full report will be available online at Media and Communication Educational and Research Center's website:

Trainings and masterclasses in PR and Communication Strategies

Media and Communication Educational and Research Center (MCERC) has launched short-term workshops and masterclasses focusing on "Public Relations and Communication Strategies – 101". The first workshop was held in Tbilisi on September 5. The next training was conducted in Batumi, on October 26-27. Trainings were attended by a variety of PR and media relations enthusiasts, including K12 students, HEI students, entry-level professionals, media presenters, civic activists, psychologists and international relations specialists (up to 40 participants in total).

Participants created sound scripts for public statements, enacted them in front of the camera, participated in briefing enactment and debates.

Workshops are based on media psychologist Prof. Mariam Gersamia's certified course (PR 101) and consist of the following theoretical and practical modules and topics:

- Communication models & Body language
- Media memory and message structuring ("sound scripting")
- Public speaking and debating skills
- Organising a briefing
- Media relations: writing crisis response plan
- Media and emotions: why negative news attract us?
- Creating strategic communication plan.

Participants were awarded certificates at the end of the workshop. MCERC would like to express gratitude to a TSU alumna, journalist and media researcher Tamar Kuratishvili for supporting and taking part in organising the event.





PUBLIC RELATIONS

MCERC team at the International Conference "Emerging Perspectives in Social Science"

MCERC members (Mariam Gersamia, Maia Toradze and Liana Markariani) presented a study at International online conference "LAW, BUSINESS AND INNOVATION STUDIES (LBIS)" with focus "Emerging Perspectives in Social Science" On September 9.

The title of the presentation was "Gender Stereotypes and Safety Risks for Female Journalists in Georgian Media (2019/2021 Analysis)". Authors presented the findings of the three-phase study and future research perspectives.

A special session dedicated to gender equality and women's engagment was chaired by MCERC chairwoman Mariam Gersamia. Two day conference was attended by the members of academia from different countries.



Partnership for gender equality and and increasing women engagement in STEM

The chairwomen of MCERC Mariam Gersamia Participated in the Annual Forum for supporting women in technologies and STEM - "Women in IT" on November 12. The event was organized by Georgian IT Integrator company LAB



(MCERC's partner organisation) and American Hewlett Packcard Enterprise.

In frame of the panel discussion Mariam Gersamia talked about the role of media and education in battling gender stereotypes and increasing engagement of women and girls in STEM. With this topic Mariam Gersamia and the Executive Director of the "LAB" Anna Katchiuri participated in the talk-show at the broadcasting company "Rustavi 2". see the link:



Discussions with media representatives

MCERC conducted series of discussions with media managers and journalists on topic "Media environment before elections 2021, existed threats and challengies of coverage in crisis". he discussions were organized by with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation's South Caucasus Office and the Federal Republic of Germany's Federal Foreign Office.

The aim of the discussions was to enhance supportive media environment and it highlighted the threats / safety risks journalists face before elections, and opportunities to protect journalists' safety.





Presentation of the Study and discussion



"Media environment before and after 2021 elections: threats and supportive mechanisms" – this is the title of the study which Media and Communication Educational and Research Center (MCERC) presented on November 18. Study determined features which best corresponded with the 2021 elections media environment in Georgia. Research contains recommendations on creating a safe and supportive media environment, highlights threats and challenges that employees in the media sphere faced during the pre-& post-election period and attempts to answers the question of how much political polarisation and crises affect the media.

The presentation was attended by representatives of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation's South Caucasus Office, media, NGO and academia, as well as students.

The event launched with opening remarks by the Head of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom South Caucasus Office Peter-Andreas Bochmann. Research findings were presented by the co-author of the study, MCERC chairwoman Professor Mariam Gersamia. The panel discussion took place with the co-author of the study and MCERC board member, Professor Maia Toradze as its moderator. As part of the discussion panel, online media platform "publika.ge" editor Zura Vardiashvili talked about digital media environment and online media challenges during the election period. Natia Trapaidze, TV Channel "Mtavari" journalist talked about solidary media environment, importance of solidarity and existing challenges for its implementation. The head of the analytical and news sprograms Giorgi Targamadze of TV Channel "Formula" talked about political influence on media environment.



Panel Discussion was followed by questions and remarks from media, NGO and academia representatives, such as: "TV Pirveli" talk-show presenters Eka Mishveladze and Vika Bukia; "Mtavari" talk-show presenter and a journalist Natia Gogsadze; "Maestro TV" producer Tornike Koshkadze; Head of the news service of "palitraNews" Eka Tsivtsivadze; editor of the online media "Tabula", Ana Gvarishvili; "Gnomon Wise" media researcher, David Kutidze; Media researcher from "Media Rights", Eka Basilaia and others.

At the end of the event Giorgi Targamadze and Zura Vardiashvili awarded MCERC interns with certificates. see the live stream of the event here:

https://fb.watch/9q0R9ru-eX/

The study was conducted with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation's South Caucasus Office and the Federal Republic of Germany's Federal Foreign Office.





Auswärtiges Amt

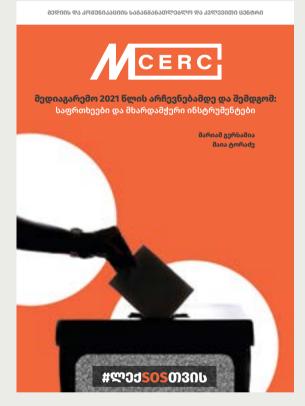






Research

Media Environment before and After Elections: Threats and Supportive Instruments



Study determined features which best corresponded with the 2021 elections media environment in Georgia. Research highlights threats and challenges that employees in the media sphere faced during the pre-& post-election period and attempts to answers the question of how much political polarisation and crises affect the media. Research contains recommendations on creating a safe and supportive media environment.

The study was conducted with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation's South Caucasus Office and the Federal Republic of Germany's Federal Foreign Office.

Seminar

Media and Political Participation



On November 27, the Robert Schuman Institute (RSI) in cooperation with Wilfried Martens Center for European Studies (WMCES) and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung organised "Rule of Law Academy for Eastern Partnership countries" series of seminars in Tbilisi. In the frame of this module chairwoman of MCERC media psychologist Mariam Gersamia conducted a seminar on "media and political participation". Seminar was followed with lively discussion which covered topics: how to increase political participation, how to plan effectively political communication and what to consider about nature of media influence. 12 young professionals / advisors of the centre-right wing political parties and their parliamentary groups in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine participated in the seminar.



Memorandum with International University "Alterbridge"

On 15 December a cooperation memorandum was signed between MCERC (Media and Communication Educational and Research Center) and "AlterBridge" - International University of Management and Communication.

MCERC's side in the memorandum was represented by the center's Chairwoman Mariam Gersamia, meanwhile the university's side was represented by the university Rector Natia Gotsadze.

"I am thrilled that as part of our partnership we get to involve students and academic personnel in projects initiated by the Media and Communication Educational and Research Center and co-organize various large-scale events on society's most topical affairs. I believe that our collaboration will be mutually beneficial and fruitful" - commented "AlterBridge" rector Natia Gotsadze.

The aim of this memorandum is to contribute to the development of higher education and provide the job market with highly qualified, competent individuals; to implement educational systems which meet international standards and contemporary career advancement requirements.

The sides have agreed to implement joint aimed programs/projects, to plan and realize research activities, joint conferences and practical educational activities, which will be focused on improving intellectual, creative and professional qualities of individuals as well as providing the labor market with adequate employees.





Our collaboration is fortified by values which are a pre-requisite for a life-long successful learning and education. These values include respect towards notions of diversity, professionalism, appreciation and encouraging of creativity and freedom as well as building teamwork and trust amongst other things. We are planning many interesting joint projects together with "Alterbridge", which will surely help students and the academic staff's self-realization and development" - noted MCERC Chairwoman Mariam Gersamia



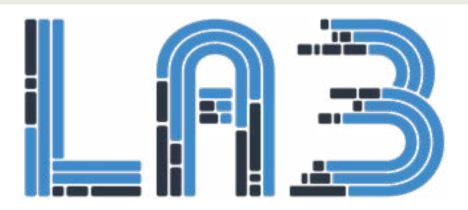
The signing ceremony was attended by "Alterbridge's" Vice-Rector and Head of the Higher Education Program Mako Jaoshvili, Head of the Mass Communication Bachelor Program Tamta Jinjolava as well as MCERC's Board Member and Senior Researcher Maia Toradze.

Memorandum for supporting informal education

From now on, MCERC and LAB will set out to support informal education and popularize science and the technological field amongst girls in a series of joint activities. Memorandum of cooperation between MCERC (Media and Communication Educational and Research Center) and LAB was signed on 20 December. The aim of this memorandum is to support informal education as well as to organise and hold joint local and international projects, conferences, workshops and public talks. Both sides have agreed to implement joint educational activities, which will aim at the realization of an individual's intellectual, creative and professional potential.

]]

From MCERC's side, the memorandum was signed by the center's chairwoman, Mariam Gersamia, who made the following comment: "Spreading education about new technologies and science and popularizing innovative knowledge is very important in the Media and Communication field. Collaboration with LAB includes activities, which aim to encourage involvement of women and girls in various scientific (media and technology included) fields."





From LAB's side, the memorandum was signed by Anna Kachiuri, who remarked that "It is very important for the technological and scientific fields to cooperate with the media and education sectors in order to popularise innovations and increase involvement and encouragement of women in the field. LAB collaborates with various organisations and is enthusiastic about embracing beliefs, which ensure individual development and humanist values (equality, freedom, tolerance etc.) in the age of fast technological advancement. Our company's everyday work is a perfect reflection of upholding such values."

The event was also attended by MCERC Board Member and Senior Researcher Maia Toradze and LAB's team members.

Our Partners

Center collaborates with higher educational institutions, local and international organizations, companies, educational and research centers since 2015. Future plans include to broaden collaboration and hold joint conferences, seminars and implementation of research and educational activities.







Auswärtiges Amt























Our Team



Mariam Gersamia

MCERC founder and Chairwoman

Mariam Gersamia is a chairwoman of Media and Communication Educational and Research Center, Mariam is a professor, media psychologist at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU, Georgia); She got her doctoral degree in journalism studies (2004) and post-diploma education in bodyoriented psychology (2018); With 21 years of experience in academia, she was in charge of the journalism and mass communication department and programs, twice-elected as a member of the academic council (2010-2015).

Mariam is an author of research papers, textbook and monography. She cooperated with local and international organizations, worked for the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia as a head of PR department and minister's adviser (2006-2009), was executive director of the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia (2009-2014). For now, she is in charge of the English taught graduate program "media psychology and communications" at TSU. Mariam is a member of international scientific associations and editorial boards. She is an honorable citizen of Louisville (USA) Her major fields are: media psychology, gender and media, public relations, media education and political communications.

Maia Toradze

Board Member and Senior Researcher of the Centre

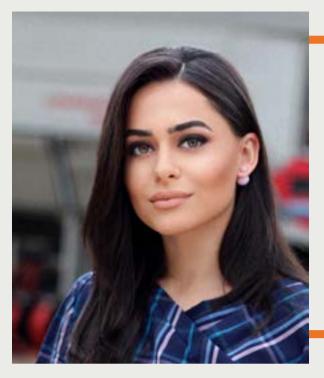


Maia Toradze is a board member and senior researcher of the Media and Communication Education and Research Center.

Maia is Associate Professor and head of the undergraduate program in Journalism at the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. She has 30 years of experience working in various media publications, including being a correspondent and editor in print publications ("Shansi", "Kavkasioni", "Aqcenti"); She is currently an employee of TSU Publicity and Electronic Media Center.

Maia Toradze started her pedagogical work in 2005. She received a degree in Journalism in 2006 and is currently an Associate Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication.

She is an author of several textbooks and an editor of five books, as well as a co-author of 13 publicistic collections. Maia Toradze is involved in scientific research projects. Her works have been published in both Georgian and foreign scientific journals.



Liana Markariani

Research Fellow

Liana Markariani is a research fellow at MCERC. Liana is a media psychologist and a PhD student in Mass Communications at Tbilisi State University. Additionally, she actively collaborates with the TSU Multimedia Center, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences. She holds an MSc in Media Studies (from English taught graduate program "media psychology and communications" at TSU) and nowadays she is a TV host and a reporter at the Georgian Public Broadcasting.

Her main areas of research are: media effects, false information, propaganda, ethnic minority issues, disinformation and the influence of social media on audience behavior. Her distinguished research works are: "Fake News in Social Media (Examples of Georgian and Armenian Media)"' "Pseudo-positive Information and COVID-19: Reasons Behind Sharing Fake News (Georgian Social Media Analysis)" and "The voice of women and challenges of gender equality in Georgian media", which she conducted with MCERC team.

Liana actively participates in international scientific conferences and recently conducted a training course - "False Information and Its Impacts" attended by more than 500 students (including ethnic minorities from various regions). She was selected as a participant of the M100 Young European Journalists project (M100YEJ) in 2021 and her articles on ethnic minorities and diversity have received awards from the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality. Liana speaks English, Russian, Armenian, Spanish and Turkish languages. We are also proud of her achievement to accept the Gold Medal of Tbilisi State University for speaking and writing in literary Georgian in 2021.

Nini Shengelia

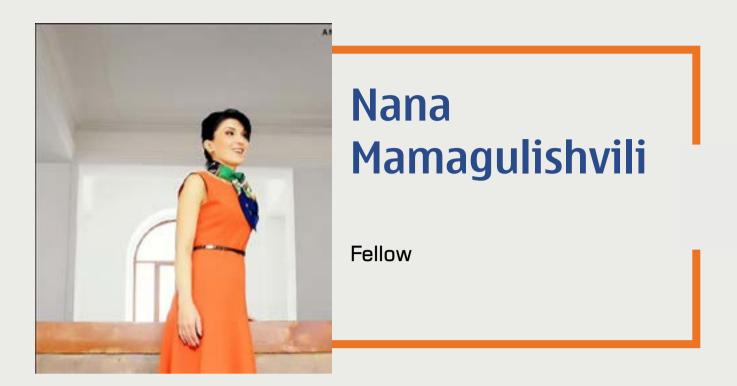
Research Fellow



Nini Shengelia is a research fellow at MCERC and her areas of research interests includes human rights, digital and social media. Nini is a lawyer and a social media law professional, lecturer at Tbilisi State University and a PHD researcher based in Georgia. Nini's research is concerned with digital constitutionalism, regulation, co-regulation and self-regulation of social media platforms, digital rights, human rights, gender equality, social media councils, platform governance, intermediary liability as well as impact of social media and human rights on fragile democracies.

Nini studied law at King's College London and has completed a Master's Degree at BPP University in the framework of her scholarship from a leading London based law firm, Herbert Smith Freehills. In 2021 she was a visiting researcher at HIIG in the framework of DAAD Scholarship of Research Grants for PHD students.

Nini worked as a lecturer of law at Georgian Institute of Public Affairs at the Department of Law and Politics between 2016 and 2019. She has been working as a lecturer of Media Law at Tbilisi State University at the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication Studies since 2020. Since 2019 Nini is a member of "Digital Constitutionalism Discussion Group" at HIIG. On behalf of Digital Democracy Center, Nini organized a Roundtable discussion on 'Legal Aspects of Content Management on Social Media, Disinformation and Media Literacy' in 2020. Nini alongside former HIIG fellow and professor Edoardo Celeste is also a co-organizer of a scientific conference "Human Rights in the Digital Age Regulating Online Disinformation: European Perspectives". Additionally, Nini has worked for the Georgian Media Regulator, Communications Commission, leading law firms in London, Herbert Smith Freehills and Stephenson Harwood and currently she is a partner at a consultancy firm, the Capstone Group. Nini is the author of publications in peer-reviewed journals on the topic of online content moderation, platform liability, digital constitutionalism and human rights.



Nana Mamagulishvili is a member of MCERC since 2017. She is a journalist and producer with 28 years of experience. She is a doctoral student at Tbilisi State University.

Nana has 15 years of experience in public relations and 8 years of teaching experience on undergraduate and graduate programs.

She is in charge of the vocational education program "Event Management" at TSU.



Lisa is our team's creative consultant since 2018. She's a multidisciplinary creative who has worked as a brand designer for various industries and organizations.

In 2020, Lisa co-founded creative agency Notam in Tbilisi (Georgia) and has been art directing and managing projects at the company.

From 2018 to 2021 she studied Audio-Visual and Media Arts at Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA). Currently enrolled in Miami Ad School Europe on the program of Art Direction, she starts her new journey in Berlin in April 2022.

Contact us



https://www.linkedin.com/company/media-andcommunication-educational-research-center-mcerc



https://www.instagram.com/mcerc_georgia/



https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3_ i2b0Pl8cfSeboj4KcnlQ



