

MEMO 98

Annual Report

***"PROMOTING QUALITY MEDIA, DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS, AS
WELL AS DIGITAL LITERACY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT,
WORLDWIDE"***

2024

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Executive Summary



RASŤO KUŽEL

Executive Director, MEMO 98

In 2024, we marked 26 years since MEMO 98 was founded—an organization born out of the democratic struggle of the late 1990s and supported early on by partners like NDI, and NED. We still carry ‘98’ to remind ourselves of that critical turning point when we committed to defend democratic values through media monitoring and civic engagement. Our greatest strength today lies not just in our expertise, but in the network of colleagues and friends with whom we’ve worked and shared lessons across more than 60 countries.

This year, we strengthened our role as a key defender of democratic integrity, civic space, and media freedom both at home and abroad. Through campaigns like Vote Match (*Volebná kalkulačka*), and I WANT TO STAY HERE (*Chcem tu zostať*), we mobilized young and first-time voters, while fostering inclusive dialogue on youth participation and gender equality.

We contributed to election assessments, both in Slovakia and internationally - we carried out media monitoring prior to the presidential and EP elections, and initiated proceedings against illegal campaigning by public officials; and we also joined both the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE) and the Slovak Platform for Democracy (*Platforma pre demokraciu*), reinforcing our advocacy against democratic backsliding.

Amid intensifying pressure on civil society and the media in Slovakia, we co-initiated widely resonating public petition against the capture of public broadcaster and remained steadfast in our mission: to ensure that all citizens have free access to comprehensive information by co-organising series of activities for more vulnerable groups, including for seniors.

About MEMO 98



VISION

MEMO 98 envisions societies where people have free access to comprehensive, reliable, and diverse information. We strive to ensure that media serves as a pillar of democracy, enabling informed public debate and critical thinking. Through media monitoring, civic engagement, and strategic advocacy, we defend democratic values and fight disinformation. Our vision is a resilient information space where truth, accountability, and transparency thrive.

MISSION

- Monitor traditional and social media to track media manipulation, disinformation, including gender-based, and challenges to electoral integrity, resulting in democratic backsliding.
- Deliver timely, data-driven and factual analysis to enrich public debate and empower citizens, especially first- and second-time voters.
- Support vulnerable groups, including women and seniors, to resist disinformation and engage in democratic processes.
- Provide technical assistance and expert legal analysis as well as advocacy to strengthen media regulation, institutional accountability, and democratic safeguards.
- Collaborate with influencers, creatives, and media to amplify credible information through innovative and audience-specific campaigns.
- Build partnerships with national and international actors to align Slovak democratic resilience efforts with global best practices.

Key achievements

In 2024, we implemented nine major projects focused on strengthening democratic participation, media freedom, and electoral integrity in Slovakia and beyond. We successfully informed young voters through impactful tools like Vote Match (*Volebná kalkulačka*), which together attracted more than 120,000 completions and over 440,000 unique visitors at our election information hub (infovolby.sk). Our video campaigns and podcasts reached over 1 million views, sparking public debate on gender equality and youth engagement. We conducted election media monitoring, challenged illegal campaigning by public officials and with other civil society partners collected over 80,000 signatures against state capture of the Slovak public broadcaster. We organized high-level debates, embassy briefings, and contributed to election observation missions across Europe and Asia. We joined the EPDE and the Slovak Platform for Democracy, reinforcing our advocacy role. Despite increasing threats to civil society and media freedom, we continued to defend democratic values, drawing on 26 years of experience and a global network of trusted partners.

Ak má iba plno rečí, nemusíš to počúvať.

Daj si rande s volebnou kalkulačkou na infovolby.sk a zisti s názormi ktorého kandidáta máš najväčšiu zhodu.



Projects

9 KEY PROJECTS IN SLOVAKIA AND ABROAD



Public events

OVER 15 DEBATES, BRIEFINGS, EXPERT PANELS, DISCUSSIONS



International missions

16 ELECTIONS OBSERVATION MISSIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Projects



A comprehensive infoportal on the elections in Slovakia.

[Visit Infovolby](#)

VOTE MATCH 2024 (NED)

The “Vote Match 2024 – Slovakia” project, led by MEMO 98 with NED support, informed first- and second-time voters and women ahead of the 2024 presidential and European Parliament elections through tools like the VoteMatch app (with over 120,000 completions and some 440,000 unique visitors), a podcast series (25,000+ listeners), and public debates on gender and democracy. In partnership with Via Iuris, Political Capital, and others, the project combined civic outreach with systematic monitoring of traditional and social media, exposing disinformation, misuse of official positions, and limited pluralism in TV debates. Six analytical reports covering TV, online news, fringe portals, and platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok helped raise awareness and support evidence-based advocacy—including a formal complaint against the Interior Minister and other public officials for illegal campaigning. Despite challenges, including the cancellation of a planned international conference, MEMO 98 continued to highlight regulatory gaps and foster regional civic engagement to counter democratic backsliding and manipulation.

VOTE MATCH SLOVAKIA 2024 (UK EMBASSY)

Complementing the NED-funded “Vote Match 2024” initiative, MEMO 98 also implemented a UK Embassy-supported project that further boosted democratic participation and digital resilience during the 2024 Slovak elections. By enhancing the VoteMatch app and running high-impact social media campaigns, the project engaged over 120,000 users across both presidential and EP elections—including young voters—and reached hundreds of thousands through targeted video content. These efforts not only amplified the reach and impact of the broader Vote Match initiative but also strengthened MEMO 98’s digital capacities and contributed to fostering informed, youth-driven civic engagement.

Projects



VOTE MATCH 2.0 SLOVAKIA (OIP)

As a focused complement to broader VoteMatch efforts, MEMO 98 implemented the “*VoteMatch 2.0 Slovakia 2024 – Promotion Spend*” project with the support from the Open Information Partnership (OIP), targeting the final weeks before Slovakia’s presidential election. This funding enabled an intensive, data-driven digital campaign combining promotion, influencer outreach, and age-tailored content to maximize engagement. The project drove over 105,000 visits to infovolby.sk in under a month and played a key role in the spike of almost 90,000 VoteMatch completions during the election. With technical support from the OIP, MEMO 98 boosted its digital campaign capacity, delivering impactful voter education and disinformation resilience at a critical electoral moment.

VOTE MATCH SLOVAKIA 2024 (OIP)

In addition to NED and UK Embassy support, MEMO 98 implemented the “*VoteMatch Slovakia 2024*” project with the support from the Open Information Partnership (OIP), specifically targeting enhanced civic engagement and counter-disinformation efforts during Slovakia’s 2024 elections. This support enabled the production of 9 videos, 6 podcast episodes, and 8 media monitoring reports, while also facilitating broad outreach through social media and the establishment of partnerships with over 70 organizations. The OIP-backed activities contributed to raising awareness about disinformation and ensured the long-term sustainability and scalability of the VoteMatch initiative.

Projects

THE FUTURE OF THE EU



“VOTE MATCH 3.0 SLOVAKIA EU ELECTIONS 2024 (OIP)

Through the Open Information Partnership, MEMO 98 implemented the “*VoteMatch 3.0 Slovakia EU Elections 2024 – Promotion Spend*” project to boost voter participation ahead of the European Parliament elections. Despite a short timeframe, the campaign delivered strong results—almost 35,000 completions of the VoteMatch tool and 108,000 unique site visits (infovolby.sk)—by combining strategic engagement, video promotion, and targeted digital outreach. With technical assistance from the OIP, MEMO 98 further developed its campaign capabilities, reinforcing its ability to engage disenfranchised groups and counter disinformation through accessible, trustworthy content.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO POPULAR VOTING ADVICE APPLICATIONS INTO WESTERN BALKAN (VISEGRAD FUND)

The project “*Expanding Access to Popular Voting Advice Applications through Visegrad into Western Balkan*” aims to develop and disseminate non-partisan online Voting Advice Applications (VAAs) to enhance voter education and issue-based participation among young and less politically engaged citizens. Building on the successful VAA models in Czechia, Slovakia, and Hungary, the initiative tries to adapt and implement these tools in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, ahead of their respective elections. MEMO 98 plays an important role, drawing on its impactful experience from Slovakia’s 2023 elections, where it targeted young voters and women to improve their decision making by providing information via infovolby.sk.

Projects

PROJECT PARTNERS

€ Co-funded by the European Commission (DG-JUST)

📅 Project duration: 02.2022-02.2024

🗺️ 11 European countries: Spain, Germany, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia

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Co-funded by the European Union

PIONEERING ANTI-SLAPP TRAINING FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION (EU)

Since 2022, MEMO 98 continued to implement the PATFox project, including the curriculum as part of a wider EU-funded initiative to counter Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), which threaten freedom of expression and public oversight. MEMO 98 led the Slovak component of this 11-country project. The initiative focused on equipping legal professionals, journalists, and civil society actors with the knowledge and tools to identify, resist, and defend against SLAPPs. Key results included the development of a Slovak curriculum by Dr. Tomáš Langer, LL.M., the publication of a case study (*“Konspiratori.sk vs Hlavné spravy”*) in Slovak and English, and the delivery of expert workshops for lawyers and public-interest defenders. The project enhanced awareness, legal preparedness, and resilience among target groups while reinforcing broader protections for investigative journalism and civic engagement.

Projects



SUPPORT FOR UKRAINIAN REFUGEES THROUGH THE MEDIA (UNESCO)

In a partnership with Slovak media, UNESCO and the Government of Japan were spearheading a project to empower Ukrainian refugees in Slovakia, fostering their integration and resilience through access to reliable information and media support. Media hold the means to counter suspicion, fear and social stigmas. MEMO 98 partners with Slovak media - *TA3*, *The Slovak Spectator* and the association of regional broadcasters (*LOToS*) - intended to give voice to Ukrainians and to achieve greater diversity within refugee-related media coverage.

The project that was launched in the summer 2023 and lasted until January 2024 in three countries of Slovakia, Moldova and Romania, aimed to increase access of Ukrainian refugees to reliable information on key issues of their concern, such as humanitarian assistance by authorities and partners. The main aim was to increase their self-reliance and resilience and create favourable conditions for their peaceful co-existence and possible integration into the host communities in Slovakia.

Projects



COUNTERING DISINFORMATION WITH SENIORS (NED, GOOGLE)

MEMO 98 and its partners (Czech organization Transitions and a broad network of local Slovak partners) continued to advance media and AI literacy among older adults through the projects supported by Google and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The initiative delivered more than 30 educational activities—including targeted workshops, inter-generational discussions, and two training-of-trainers sessions aimed at building local capacities. In total, over 400 seniors were actively engaged. A highlight was the senior-focused BarCamp in January 2024, which brought together participants from across Slovakia to share ideas, build skills, and explore the role of AI and media. The project strengthened digital resilience, encouraged informed civic engagement, and fostered meaningful inter-generational dialogue in an era of rapid technological change.



Public events



THE JOURNALISM AWARD

MEMO 98 has been a partner of the most prestigious journalism award for more than a decade. The competition is to recognise and highlight quality journalism and the work of journalists. In the long term, the Award, announced by the Open Society Foundation, is interested in promoting media freedom and highlighting the indispensable role of independent journalism for a free civil society and a functioning democracy.

The final ceremony, organised traditionally around International Press Freedom Day, hosted Maria Ressa, founder of investigative *Rappler.com* and the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, awarded to her (together with Dmitry Muratov from *Novaya Gazeta*) for “*efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace*”.



Public events

BRIEFINGS, DEBATES AND DISCUSSIONS

In 2024, MEMO 98 played an important role in shaping public discussions on electoral integrity, role of election and media regulators, media independence, including role of public media, civic engagement, and democratic resilience through a series of high-profile events, briefings, and expert panels.

These events provided an in-depth look into MEMO 98's election-related activities, particularly its tools for engaging youth, such as the Voting Advice Application (VAA), and served as a platform to highlight the growing threats to civil society in Slovakia. Such discussions and event were an important part of MEMO 98's broader strategy to advocate for democratic accountability and informed electoral participation.



MEMO 98 participated in several expert analyses and consultations in electoral and media matters.

In stark contradiction with the text and spirit of the adopted European Media Freedom Act, the Slovak ruling coalition initiated a complete overhaul of the public broadcaster RTVS that eventually led the change of its management and its controlling body. MEMO 98 tried to inform and alert public about political motives of attempted changes through various activities, such as: monitoring of media regulatory body decisions (that disclosed, contrary to political claims, that 80 per cent of cases against broadcaster were baseless), public petition with other civil society partners (Let's stop the RTVS hijacking!) that was supported by more than 80,000 people, or media and public discussions (here Ivan Godársky in a panel 24 April discussion with Silvia Hroncová, Minister of Culture of the 2023 caretaker government).

Public events

BRIEFINGS, DEBATES AND DISCUSSIONS II.

MEMO 98 also contributed to international policy discussions. At the EPDE General Assembly (30 September) and the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference (1 October), MEMO 98 presented its evolving methodologies for election monitoring and emphasized the importance of follow-up mechanisms for electoral recommendations. This work continued at the FURIC Conference in Brussels (11-12 December) organised by EPDE, where the organization engaged in high-level debates on electoral reforms and hybrid threats, underscoring the interconnectedness of electoral integrity and democratic security. These international platforms allowed MEMO 98 to showcase its leadership in electoral observation, including its pioneering work on countering online disinformation.



Public events

BRIEFINGS, DEBATES AND DISCUSSIONS III.

MEMO 98 reinforced its advocacy efforts during the Forum 2000 conference on 16 October by hosting a panel titled “Addressing Democratic Backsliding through Elections.” Moderated by Executive Director Rasťo Kužel, the discussion featured experts from across Central Europe who explored strategies to safeguard electoral processes and bolster civic participation. The conversation centered on actionable lessons from the 2023 elections and the critical role of civil society in resisting authoritarian trends. In addition, MEMO 98 contributed to the Slovak Journalistic Award by co-financing the prizes and serving on juries for both the written and audiovisual categories, further demonstrating its long-term commitment to good quality and professional journalism.

On 12 November 2024, MEMO 98 took part in a debate organized by Visegrad Insight in Bratislava, which explored how the European Commission could deepen its engagement with civil society, particularly through more inclusive policymaking and funding access. The debate brought together stakeholders including MEP Vladimír Bilčík, civil society leaders like Zuzana Številová, and representatives from the Commission. MEMO 98 emphasized the need for more transparent, consultative processes and highlighted its experience in effectively engaging youth and marginalized communities. These discussions, alongside its highly visible public campaigns, including podcasts, Instagram Reels, and video content that reached hundreds of thousands, positioned MEMO 98 as an important player in promoting participatory democracy at home and abroad.



International missions

In 2024, MEMO 98 experts played significant roles in international election missions and projects, contributing their expertise across a range of electoral contexts.

Ivan Godársky served as a Media Analyst for the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission to Mongolia as well as to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he assessed the legal and regulatory framework governing media coverage, monitored the fairness and pluralism of election reporting, and briefed the mission leadership on emerging challenges. His work provided valuable input into the final recommendations aimed at strengthening media independence and ensuring equitable access for all electoral contestants.

Rasto Kužel played a role in Georgia throughout 2024 in two capacities. As part of the National Democratic Institute's (NDI) international election observation mission, he observed the conduct of elections in various regions of Georgia, providing firsthand assessments of election-day procedures, campaign environments, and local media dynamics. Prior to this, Rasto worked as a Council of Europe expert to support the Georgian Communications Commission (ComCom) and Central Election Commission (CEC). He designed and delivered a multi-phase Training of Trainers program and capacity-building sessions, focused on strengthening institutional resilience to disinformation and improving media monitoring methodologies. These initiatives enhanced the country's ability to ensure fair, ethical, and professional election coverage.

Marek Mračka held senior leadership roles in several election missions. He served as Deputy Head of Mission for the OSCE/ODIHR Election Assessment Mission to the UK, overseeing the core team, engaging with stakeholders, and co-authoring the final mission report. Earlier in the year, he worked as a Regional Expert for the OSCE/ODIHR Special Election Assessment Mission for the EP elections, covering Finland, Latvia, and Poland, focusing on accessibility for persons with disabilities and inclusive electoral practices. Later, he acted as Press Officer for the EU Election Observation Mission in Sri Lanka, where he coordinated all public communications, organized press events, and supported the delivery of the mission's key messages to both domestic and international audiences.



Partnerships

EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

In 2024, we applied to become a member of the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE), recognizing the strategic value of joining a network dedicated to strengthening citizen election observation across Europe. With over 26 years of experience in media monitoring, election observation, and combating disinformation, we saw this as an opportunity to both contribute its expertise—particularly in digital engagement and disinformation analysis—and to benefit from peer-learning, joint missions, and enhanced advocacy capacities. Our application emphasized shared values of transparency, electoral integrity, and democratic resilience. Following a review, the EPDE General Assembly in Warsaw decided to accept MEMO 98 as a regular member, formalizing a partnership that promises mutual enrichment and stronger impact across European democracies.

PLATFORM FOR DEMOCRACY

In 2024, MEMO 98 joined the Platform for Democracy (*Platforma pre demokraciu*), which unites more than 70 non-governmental organizations and initiatives working to protect and promote the civil sector in Slovakia. Its vision is a society where individuals have a safe and free environment for their civic, economic, cultural, family, and religious activities, with civil society as a key pillar of democracy. As an informal platform, the platform is committed to defending and developing civil society based on the principles of voluntarism, partnership, democratic decision-making, plurality, personal engagement, solidarity, and subsidiarity. The platform's main goals are to advocate for a supportive institutional, legislative, and financial framework, to strengthen the integrity and cohesion of the civil sector, and to foster cooperation and support for civic initiatives and organizations.

EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP FOR DEMOCRACY

In 2024, MEMO 98 also submitted an application to become a member of the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD). If accepted, this would strengthen its position within a leading network of organizations promoting democratic governance worldwide. The decision to apply was rooted in MEMO 98's strategic focus on media, elections, and disinformation, and its commitment to contributing to joint learning, peer exchange, and advocacy at the EU level. As a new EPD member, MEMO 98 would look forward to actively engaging in collaborative initiatives that advance democratic participation, safeguard electoral integrity, and respond to digital threats to democracy.

Future plans

In 2025, MEMO 98 will focus on strengthening Slovakia’s democratic resilience by enhancing electoral integrity, by providing expert assessments of the captured public media and the current media ownership, by conducting digital literacy activities, by countering disinformation and by fostering civic engagement—particularly among young people and women. Building on its successful 2024 initiatives, the organization will continue its media monitoring activities to detect and expose long-term propaganda trends, including gendered disinformation. These insights will inform strategic communication campaigns and legal advocacy efforts aimed at protecting the integrity of democratic institutions. MEMO 98 will further develop its partnerships with organizations like *Chcem tu zostať*, and *Zakrúžkuj ženu*, while expanding the use of Voting Advice Applications (VAAs) and digital tools to empower voters and promote transparency.



Civic engagement will remain one of core priorities, with special emphasis on regional outreach and inclusion of underrepresented groups. Through influencer engagement, public debates, and youth-driven campaigns, MEMO 98 will amplify independent information and support democratic participation in a polarized environment. The organization will also advocate for stronger media and electoral oversight mechanisms, defend press freedom. Overall, MEMO 98 aims to help preserve democratic standards in Slovakia while contributing to broader regional efforts to resist democratic backsliding.

2024 Financial Overview

MEMO 98 implemented a wide range of impactful projects supported by trusted international donors. Thanks to their financial contributions, we were able to carry out strategic work in media monitoring, democratic participation, countering disinformation, AI, and media literacy – both in Slovakia and abroad. Below is a summary of all donor fundings:

Project Title	Donor	Amount
EODS III Election Observation and Democracy Support (2021-24, 2024-26)	EU	EUR 27,650
PATFox Pioneering Anti-SLAPP Training for Freedom of Expression (2022-24)	EU	EUR 5,950
Countering Disinformation Among Vulnerable Populations, Media Education with Seniors (2022-24, 2023-24, 2024-25)	National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Google, Transitions (<i>combined</i>)	EUR 50,900
Support for Ukrainian Journalists Through the Media (2023-24)	UNESCO	USD 41,500
Vote Match Slovakia (2024)	Open Information Partnership (OIP)	GBP 10,400
Vote Match Slovakia (2024)	UK Embassy (Slovakia)	GBP 3,550
Promoting Electoral Accountability and Integrity (2024-25)	NED	USD 50,900
Expert to Expert (2024)	Center for Information Resilience	GBP 20,000
Vote Match 2.0 Slovakia (2024)	OIP	GBP 10,000
Election Assessment Mission to the EP 2024 Elections - Slovakia (2024)	Election Watch	EUR 1,000

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