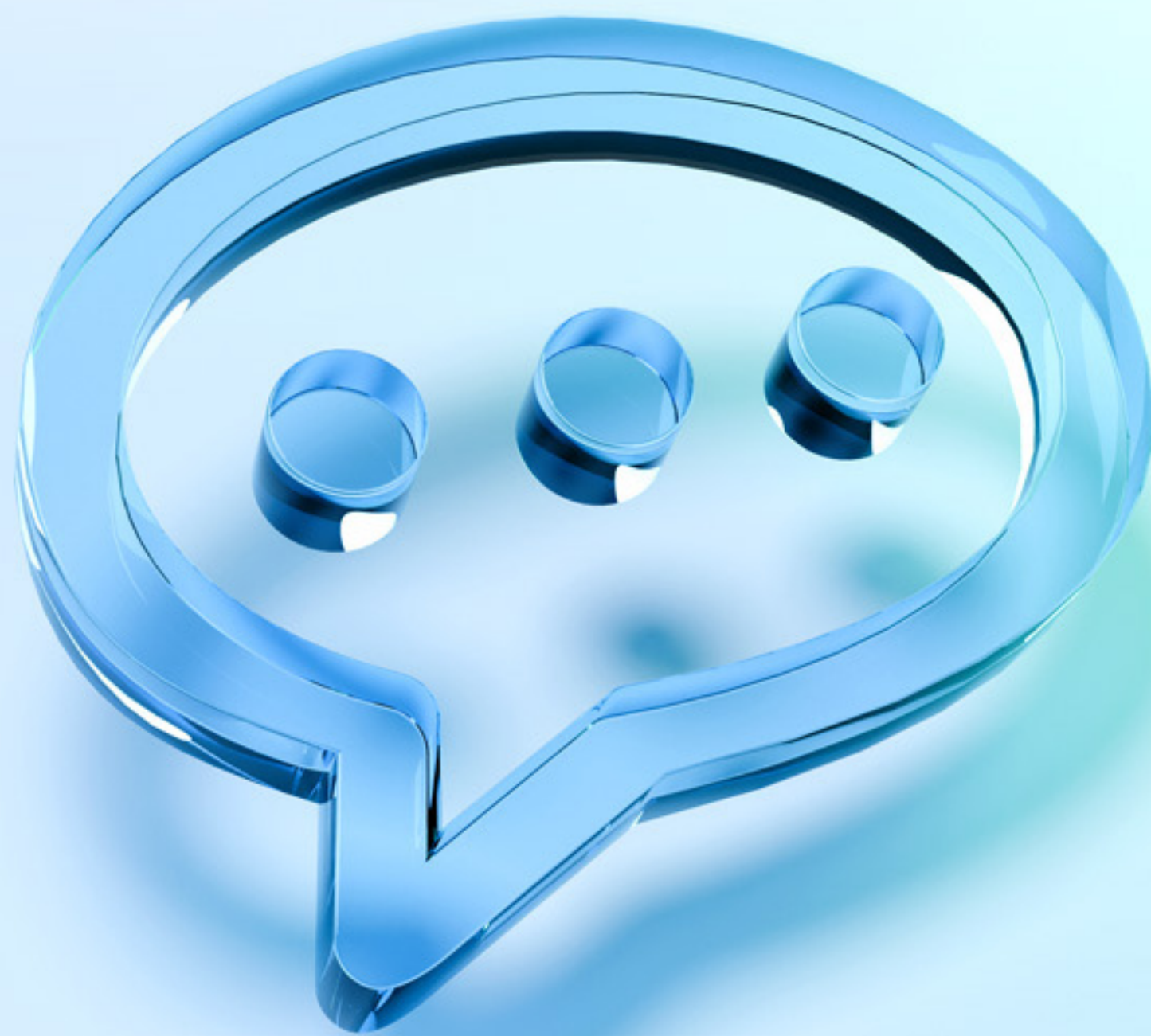


CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

# WORK REPORT

2025



## INTRODUCTION

The year 2025 once again demonstrated that democracy cannot defend itself, that the European path is not guaranteed, and that reforms are not enough if they remain confined to political messaging.

In that environment, CDT chose not to remain silent. We monitored institutions' work, identified problems, and sparked discussions on issues that were not always popular – but were important.

This is the story of that year. Of what we saw, what we said, and what we did.

## **INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN POLICY AND FOREIGN INFLUENCE**

The year 2025 brought Montenegro closer to the European Union than ever before – but it also exposed the country to a serious risk that the European path could become a formality without substance. In that context, CDT served as a voice of reason and a corrective to excessive political optimism.

While institutions celebrated a “historic momentum,” we consistently reminded the public that European integration is not a PR campaign, but a process that must deliver genuine democratic results. Our analyses and public appearances helped both domestic and international audiences distinguish political messaging from the actual state of democratic institutions.

We paid particular attention to actors and influences that exploit systemic weaknesses, social polarization, and fragile institutions.

Throughout 2025, CDT remained a reliable partner to the international community while also serving as a critical voice defending European standards precisely when they were most easily relativized. For us, the European agenda remained a matter of democracy, not geopolitics.

## COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

In a society exposed to disinformation, hate speech, and politically driven polarization, community resilience became a key democratic issue. In 2025, CDT was among the few actors addressing these challenges systematically.

Raskrinkavanje.me remained the most influential fact-checking platform in Montenegro in 2025 – modernized, more visible, and stronger than ever. During the year, the platform published 672 analyses and recorded approximately 378,000 visits.

A particularly important step forward was made in the development of new thematic areas. In 2025, *Raskrinkavanje* systematically analyzed climate disinformation, which increasingly undermines trust in science, public policies, and international commitments, as well as AI-generated disinformation. We examined the misuse of AI tools in the production of false content – from manipulated videos and photographs to the automated spread of propaganda – highlighting the risks these technologies pose to democratic processes and public information.

Although it is a small, non-profit platform that deals daily with complex and often unpopular issues, our research showed that 38.4% of citizens regularly or occasionally follow our content, while an additional 26.4% are familiar with the platform. This means that nearly two-thirds of the public are aware of *Raskrinkavanje.me*, but also that there is clear potential for further growth. Through high-quality content and a strategic approach, our goal is to reach the remaining 35.2% of citizens who are still not in contact with our work, because the fight against disinformation must be accessible to everyone.

The public opinion research we conducted revealed the scale of the problem: disinformation in Montenegro is not an exception, but part of everyday life. An alarmingly high number of citizens believe in conspiracy theories and propaganda narratives: 24.4% believe in a piece of disinformation at least once a week, and 16.9% do so daily. This is precisely why we moved our work beyond simple “debunking” and toward systematically exposing the sources of manipulation, including data misuse and foreign influence.

Through research, training sessions, and public campaigns, we strengthened citizens' ability to recognize manipulation, false narratives, and the emotional mobilization of fear and hatred. We paid particular attention to gender-based, identity-based, and politically motivated disinformation.

At the same time, CDT actively worked to prevent and understand violent extremism. In a situation where institutional mechanisms remained passive or dysfunctional, we created space for dialogue, analysis, and prevention. Through trainings, local initiatives, and national platforms, we clearly emphasized that extremism in Montenegro is not an isolated security issue, but rather a consequence of long-term institutional neglect, the normalization of hate speech, and deep political polarization.

## MEMORY CULTURE

Throughout 2025, attempts at historical revisionism and the relativization of fascism became more open and politically visible. CDT responded clearly, argumentatively, and without compromise.

Through articles, podcasts, analyses, and public reactions, we defended antifascism as a fundamental value of contemporary Montenegro. We opposed attempts to rehabilitate collaborationist ideologies and selective interpretations of history that today directly fuel division and intolerance.

A special contribution to this effort came through the fourth edition of the regional fanzine “Naše bivše” (*Our Exes*) – a critical and creative space where historical topics and contemporary social struggles are connected through an antifascist perspective.

Our initiatives produced concrete results, including the Constitutional Court’s decision that prevented the introduction of a religious celebration as the official holiday of the Municipality of Nikšić.

For CDT, memory culture is not a matter of the past, but a question of what kind of society we are building today – and how prepared we are to resist the normalization of ideologies that stand in opposition to democratic values.

## **FAIR ELECTORAL PROCESS**

Electoral reform in 2025 demonstrated how easily essential democratic changes can be reduced to the minimum level of political interest. When part of the reform was adopted without public debate or adherence to international standards, CDT clearly stated – “This is not enough!”

Although the July amendments to electoral legislation introduced certain improvements – including partial enhancements to the law on political party financing, strengthening the integrity of the electoral administration, increasing the gender quota on electoral lists, and introducing a single election day for local elections – the key problems remained unresolved. The reform was implemented partially and non-transparently, without inclusive dialogue and without a focus on international recommendations and standards.

Throughout the entire process, CDT emphasized that the way reform is implemented is just as important as its content. We particularly stressed that the law on financing political entities and election campaigns must be further improved to ensure genuine transparency, effective oversight of spending, and the prevention of the abuse of state resources, alongside clear and deterrent sanctions.

Through analyses, public appearances, and two major national conferences, we brought electoral issues back into the public spotlight. We highlighted deficiencies in the reform process, misuse of public resources, pressure during campaigns, and the risks posed by a non-transparent process.

Alongside our public advocacy work, CDT was also actively involved in institutional processes. In addition to participating in the Parliamentary Committee for Comprehensive Electoral Reform, we had a representative in the Ministry of Public Administration’s working group for drafting the Concept Law on Local Elections, where we advocated for solutions that would make local elections more functional, transparent, and citizen-oriented.

At the same time, CDT also has a representative in the Commission for the Selection of Members of the Central Election Commission. Our objective in that process is clear: to ensure the selection of professional, independent, and credible candidates, rather than solutions driven by party calculations, because the quality of electoral administration directly affects citizens' trust in elections.

Our assessments did not remain isolated – they were later confirmed in the European Commission's report, which stated that the amendments to electoral legislation only partially addressed OSCE/ODIHR recommendations and that additional changes are needed to fully align the legal framework with European standards for inclusive, transparent, and resilient electoral processes, particularly in the area of financing political entities and election campaigns.

In a year when many chose silence or compromise, CDT chose responsibility and the public interest.

# INSTITUTIONAL TRANSPARENCY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Throughout 2025, CDT continued to do what institutions often avoid – measuring, comparing, and publicly evaluating their performance.

Our analyses and monitoring of the Government’s work showed that reforms often remained at the level of messaging, while decisions were made behind closed doors, with limited public participation and weak accountability. Institutional transparency declined across several areas, while key processes frequently unfolded without timely access to information or meaningful public debate.

We particularly pointed to the growing gap between formal progress and the actual quality of governance. Laws and decisions were often presented as reform breakthroughs, but without clear implementation plans, measurable results, or institutional willingness to be subject to public scrutiny. Parliamentary oversight of the executive branch remained weak, while independent institutions and regulatory bodies often operated under political pressure.

By analyzing how democracy functions in practice, CDT highlighted persistent patterns of partitocracy that limit institutional autonomy and turn democratic procedures into form without substance. Party control over decision-making processes narrowed the space for transparent governance, sidelined expertise, and reduced citizens’ trust in institutions.

One of CDT’s key contributions in 2025 was opening a serious public debate on the state of the judiciary by clearly pointing to the continuity of political influence and the long-standing simulation of reforms. We demonstrated that the problems are neither exceptions nor the result of isolated failures, but rather the outcome of a system that has produced changes without real effect for decades.

## **ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC POLICY**

Demographic issues in Montenegro are often reduced to political slogans and short-term measures, without a clear strategy or long-term planning. In 2025, CDT insisted that the demographic crisis is not an isolated phenomenon, but the consequence of a series of poor public policies and the absence of a serious institutional response.

Through analysis and public debate, we pointed out that demographic policy in Montenegro is largely based on improvisation – fragmented measures without clear goals, without monitoring of outcomes, and without links to economic policy, the labor market, education, and social security. We particularly emphasized that the lack of predictability, institutional stability, and a sense of future prospects directly influences citizens' decisions to leave the country or abandon long-term life planning within it.

## COMMUNICATIONS

In 2025, CDT strategically strengthened its communication capacities and its public communication. The focus was not on generating more noise, but on achieving greater reach, precision, and impact.

On the occasion of CDT's 25th anniversary, a new visual identity was introduced, and a communication plan was developed to enable clearer messaging, better coordination, and more consistent public outreach. Throughout 2025, CDT maintained a strong media presence while simultaneously developing its own communication channels as a space for deeper analysis, context, and continuity – independent of daily politics and short-form formats.

In addition, CDT continuously used its existing formats to inform and engage audiences throughout the year – from 10 podcast episodes and 18 publications to the organization of seven conferences and numerous panel discussions, along with a series of press releases, video materials, and visual content. These channels made complex topics easier to understand, ensured important issues reached the right audiences, and enabled CDT to remain a relevant and reliable source at a time when context is critically important.

During this process, [Raskrinkavanje.me](https://raskrinkavanje.me) was redesigned to become clearer, more accessible, and easier to use, with improved structure, simpler navigation, and new thematic sections reflecting growing public interest and the spread of disinformation. Interactive formats such as infographics and videos were introduced to make complex information easier to understand and share.

We introduced advanced analytics, systematic monitoring of public narratives, and improved content planning, allowing us to raise important democratic issues at the right moment and for the right audience. These improvements were clearly reflected in the results: compared to the previous year, traffic to *Raskrinkavanje* increased by more than 40%, while reach across all of the organization's social media platforms nearly doubled.

## SUPPORT

Behind every public achievement of CDT in 2025 stood a strong organizational foundation. This was not only a year of responding to crises, but also a year in which we systematically strengthened our long-term capacity to defend democracy.

Throughout 2025, CDT improved its internal policies, procedures, and professional standards, strengthening transparency, accountability, and professional practices across the organization. In doing so, we ensured that the values we advocate publicly are consistently applied in our own work as well.

The year in which we marked CDT's 25th anniversary was also a moment of deliberate reflection on our own role. Through a shared visual identity and public activities, we reaffirmed continuity while also opening space for the next phase of the organization's development.

In 2025, we also began comprehensive preparations for a new five-year strategic cycle, aware that Montenegro and civil society are entering a period marked by both uncertainty and opportunity. Strengthening the organization at this moment was not a matter of growth, but a matter of responsibility – toward the public, our partners, and the values we defend.

## CONCLUSION

The year 2025 demonstrated how fragile democracy in Montenegro remains – but also how important it is that organizations exist which refuse to settle for minimum standards.

In 2025, CDT was a voice that reminded, warned, and acted. We did not work to be popular, but to be useful. That was our choice – and our result.

At a time when truth is being relativized and institutions remain silent, we chose to speak clearly.

And we continue to do so.

<b>NGO CDT   2025 EXPENSES</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>%</b>
Net salary expenses	156,735.93	24.68%
Payroll tax expenses	17,469.20	2.75%
Payroll contribution expenses	23,330.91	3.67%
Service contract expenses – net	72,621.31	11.43%
Taxes and contributions related to service contracts	9,865.46	1.55%
Costs of projects with partner organizations	81,365.28	12.81%
Office and other material expenses	1,380.21	0.22%
Water, electricity and fuel expenses	3,923.12	0.62%
Business travel allowance expenses	1,426.91	0.22%
Telephone and internet service expenses	3,745.45	0.59%
Taxi and rent-a-car service expenses	2,571.69	0.40%
Airfare expenses	3,372.33	0.53%
Digital marketing and online promotion expenses	9,097.17	1.43%
Fixed asset depreciation expenses	12,915.47	2.03%
Conference and seminar organization expenses	20,087.14	3.16%
Other non-production service expenses – research, creative, and other agency service costs	126,528.72	19.92%
Business meeting and event expenses	10,270.37	1.62%
Hotel service expenses	6,100.74	0.96%
Payment transaction expenses	2,818.25	0.44%
Other intangible expenses – equipment procurement and retail purchase costs	12,615.46	1.99%
Real estate and property rights related expenses	56,894.00	8.96%
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>635,135.12</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

<b>NGO CDT   2025 INCOME</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>%</b>
Income from donations – legal entities	157,988.00	24.87%
Income from donations – foreign partners	339,079.17	53.39%
Income from state budget reimbursements	21,026.21	3.31%
Interest income	41.74	0.01%
Other financial income	117,000.00	18.42%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>635,135.12</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

