

## **EAMF 2018**

### **Panel Session 3**

#### **From facts to fake news. Should we be worried ?**

Moderator and *Russia Today* TV Presenter **Sophie Shevardnadze** said fake news was affecting more and more people and having an impact on our lives. Meanwhile US President Donald Trump seemed to be bypassing the traditional media and going straight to his supporters. Is traditional journalism on its way out?

**Roger Fisk**, political strategist and principal of *New Day Strategy* in the USA, said no politician in history had ever been happy with all that was written about them. “ We know that Donald Trump also looks at traditional media. Social media is just a new layer to something that has been there all along.”

It was assumed that journalism was dead in the United States but the spread of social media had ironically lead to a renaissance in journalism. “Newspapers people were digging a grave for are flourishing now that they still have a role.”

There was a similarity between Barack Obama and Donald Trump in that they both had conducted personality-led Presidential campaigns separate from the Democratic and Republican party machines.

Sophie Shevardnadze wanted to know if social media was the new ‘king maker’?

Roger Fisk: “No, some people have the touch that gets there and resonates with people. In Trump’s case it was also based on 25 or 30 years of celebrity status that meshes with his personality.”

OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media **Harlem Desir** said there were different sorts of ‘fake news’. It could be invented by one person or it could be a strategy by a state or group trying to meddle in the politics or affairs of another country. It had also been shown that fake news often goes viral faster than real news.

Previously it was a judge who decided whether a news item was maliciously false, now we were considering asking internet companies to do this. They would probably stop much more than was necessary which would thus be an attack on freedom of speech as in Russia, where thousands of websites are blocked.

Ukrainian legal counsel and human rights activist **Andrey Buzarov** said that in Ukraine the authorities blocked access to some sites and in China there was no access to Facebook but in Kazakhstan his phone exploded with information when he arrived, so he could certainly vouch for the fact that Kazakhstan respected freedom of speech.

In Ukraine there was no fact checking at government level. People were also particularly likely to believe fake news if it coincided with their own beliefs.

**Adil Jalilov**, is head of the factcheck,kz project, which he said was Kazakhstan’s only fact checking organisation. “In Kazakhstan everyone asks about Ukraine but we only check information related to public budgets and public interest though we do check some journalists’ work as well, as sometimes they exaggerate to sell more.”

Adil said factcheck.kz had a partnership with other Eurasian countries and were trying to set up a regional fact checking operation.

TV Host and journalist **Kateryna Serhatskova** of Zaorona.com said in 2014 fake stories started to harm Ukraine badly at the start of Russia's campaign for Crimea and the Donbass. "Our officials realised quickly what the fake stories were that we needed to combat. Many journalists started feeling responsible and many of them became activists. They felt like they had to fight against this false news. We can fight fake news by telling the truth and by checking all information."

Sophie Shevardnadze asked **Yusuf Omar** if it could be said that his organisation '*Hashtag our stories*' was contributing to the demise of professional journalism by training the general public to shoot stories on mobile phones.

Yusuf said before his organisation put out a story they also had layers of checks just like a professional news organisation. Some people might consider it a joke that someone from '*Russia Today*' was hosting a session on Fake News.

Sophie Shevardnadze replied that she was acting as a serious moderator.

[END/ta]