



AI4Debunk

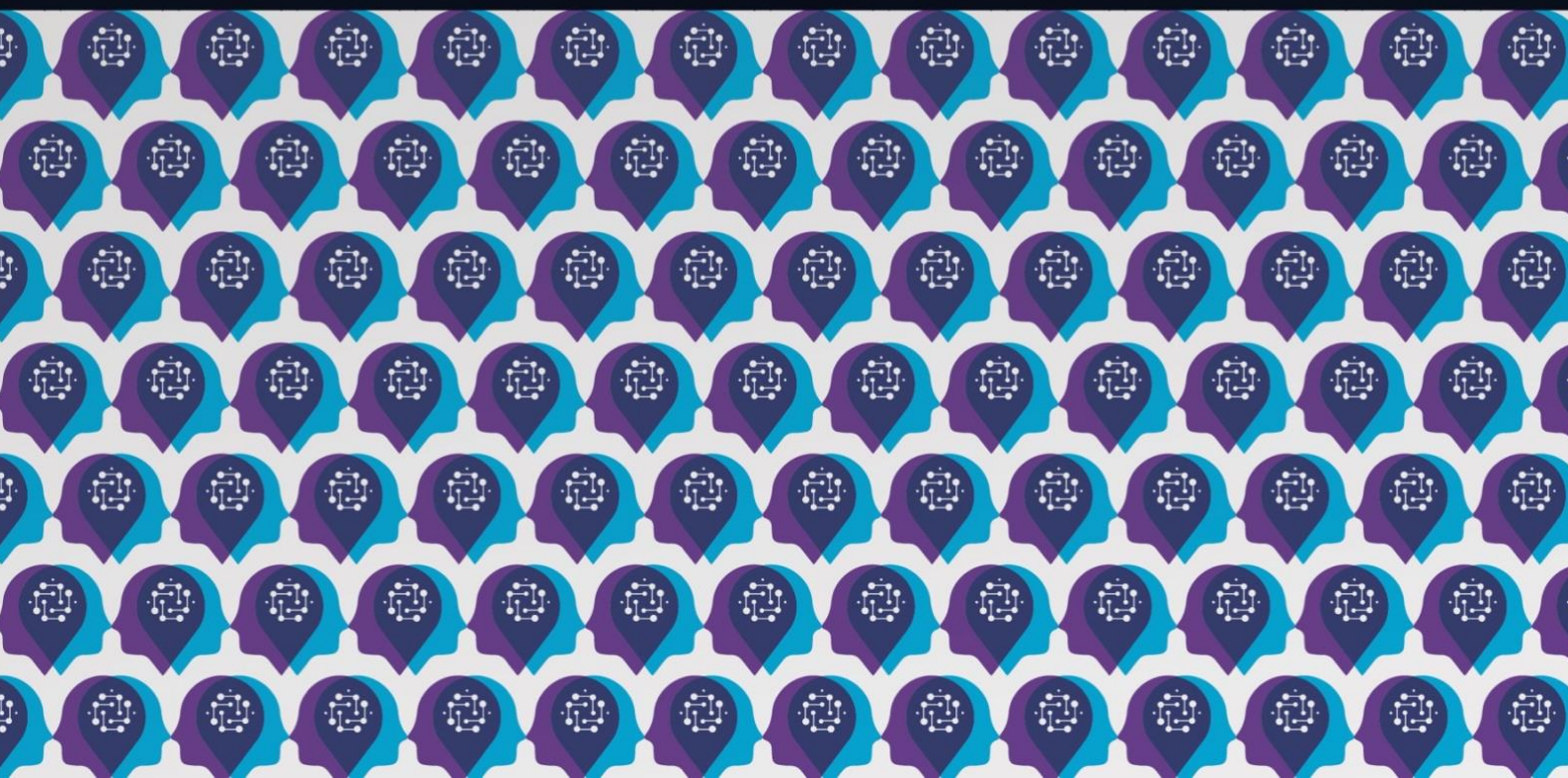
D4.1 WORKING PAPER 1

Theoretical framework for the analysis of
disinformation campaigns and foreign interference in
the EU policy making

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Theoretical framework for the analysis of disinformation campaigns and foreign interference in the EU policy making

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Abstract	The working paper establishes a theoretical framework for analyzing disinformation through a multi-dimensional lens. The paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of its nature, mechanisms, and far-reaching effects. Multifaceted nature of disinformation requires an analytical approach capable of capturing its sources, modes of dissemination, and the strategic intentions behind it.
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STATEMENT ON MAINSTREAMING GENDER

The AI4Debunk consortium is committed to including gender and intersectionality as a transversal aspect in the project's activities. In line with EU guidelines and objectives, all partners – including the authors of this deliverable – recognise the importance of advancing gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data collection in the development of scientific research. Therefore, we commit to paying particular attention to including, monitoring, and periodically evaluating the participation of different genders in all activities developed within the project, including workshops, webinars and events but also surveys, interviews and research, in general. While applying a non-binary approach to data collection and promoting the participation of all genders in the activities, the partners will periodically reflect and inform about the limitations of their approach. Through an iterative learning process, they commit to plan and implement strategies that maximise the inclusion of more and more intersectional perspectives in their activities.

DISCLAIMER

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ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial intelligence
COP	EU Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online.
DSI	Digital Services Act
EC	European Commission
ECFR	European Council on Foreign Relations
EDAP	European Democracy Action Plan
EDMO	European Digital Media Observatory
ELM	Elaboration Likelihood Model
EU	European Union
FIMI	Foreign information manipulation and interference
ICT	Information and communication technologies
FIMI	Foreign information manipulation and interference
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
UN	United Nations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Disinformation has become integral to hybrid warfare tactics, often utilized to polarize societies and weaken democratic cohesion. The working paper traces different definitions and interpretation of disinformation elaborated by the EU, NATO, member states, as well as think tanks and academic community. The AI4Debunk project's theoretical framework aligns with the European Union's approach, characterizing disinformation as an intentional, organized effort with the aim to deceive and, potentially, cause harm to public welfare. Harm may extend to democratic integrity, public health, and security, underscoring the need for stringent countermeasures. As the concept of disinformation continues to evolve, it requires both theoretical and empirical research to expose its complexity.

The analysis of the concept of disinformation provides a background for an in-depth examination of its threads —context, content, sources, credibility, target demographics, and engagement levels. By focusing on the European Union's (EU) efforts to combat disinformation, the paper evaluates EU regulatory measures, including the Digital Services Act, the 2018 Code of Practice on Disinformation, and the AI Act, which collectively emphasize content moderation and platform accountability. Despite these steps, challenges persist, particularly due to the reliance on self-regulation by digital platforms and the often reactive nature of these policies, underscoring the need for further policy innovation.

To illustrate the elaborated framework of analysis, the paper focuses on four disinformation case studies: "French Farmers Against Ukrainian Farmers," "No More Wind Power in France," "Ukraine as a Western Colony," and "Ukrainian Refugees." These cases reveal the various strategies used to misinform target audiences, ranging from manipulated media to emotionally charged false narratives. Each case demonstrates disinformation's ability to stir public sentiment, shape perceptions, and potentially influence political decision-making. The cases show how such narratives can erode Western support for Ukraine, casting the EU's policies and democratic ideals in a skeptical light.

The working paper advocates for a multi-disciplinary approach to countering disinformation, integrating insights from political science, communication theory, psychology, and technology. By establishing a robust theoretical framework, AI4Debunk aims to support the development of AI-driven tools that can identify, track, and mitigate disinformation's spread.

INTRODUCTION

The first Working paper of the AI4Debunk project offers a comprehensive exploration of the theoretical framework for analysing disinformation, a pressing concern that has emerged as one of the greatest security challenges for states and societies over the past decade. With the rapid advancement of information and communication technologies (ICT), the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), and the widespread use of social media, the digital landscape has created a fertile ground for the dissemination of false information, propaganda, and various forms of manipulation, including misinformation, malinformation, and disinformation. These activities have the potential to influence public opinion, erode trust in public institutions, and undermine democratic values.

While the manipulation of public opinion through deceptive news is not new, the modern era has witnessed its expansion to unprecedented global proportions and integration into large-scale warfare and hybrid attacks. Digital platforms, now the primary source of information for many citizens, have amplified this phenomenon. Although the promise of a free, unmediated information system appears to uphold the rights to access and be informed, events such as the U.S. presidential election and the Brexit referendum have exposed the negative side of this "information disorder"[1]**Error! Reference source not found.**, which has facilitated the rise of disinformation campaigns on a global scale.

This working paper examines how definitions of disinformation have evolved in response to the new digital realities, focusing on perspectives from EU member states, EU institutions, think tanks, and the academic community. The analysis proposes main threads of disinformation, including its context, content, sources, credibility, target audience, engagement metrics, and overall impact. Additionally, the effectiveness of the European Union's responses to this growing threat—through regulatory measures, action plans, and collaborative efforts—is evaluated. In the final section, four case studies— "French farmers against Ukrainian farmers," "No more wind power in France," "Ukraine is a colony of the West," and "Ukrainian refugees"—are analyzed using the proposed disinformation framework. These cases demonstrate the complex structure of disinformation and the diverse pathways through which it reaches and impacts target audiences.

1 DEFINING DISINFORMATION- Žaneta Ozoliņa, Sigita Struberga

Disinformation is generally understood as a way to deliberately spread false information to deceive people or to spread rumours not related to a specific point of history and examples can be found in the ancient Rome, as well as in commercial history.[2] The term "disinformation" itself roots its origins back in 1923 Russia, derived from the transliteration of the Russian term "дезинформация" into "dezinformatsiya." The State Political Directorate, the intelligence service preceding the KGB, then established a special office dedicated to disinformation to conduct active intelligence operations. This event marked the first use of the term "disinformation" as a tactic in intelligence activities which was especially sensitive during the cold war. The newly established department of the KGB's predecessor was tasked with manipulating national intelligence systems by injecting deceptive but credible information, a practice now known as "black propaganda".[3]

After 1923, disinformation became a key tactic in the Soviet political warfare strategy during the cold war. It became known as active measures, encompassing activities such as covert media placement, forgery, and the use of agents of influence. This approach, deeply rooted in Soviet-era practices, aimed to weaken the West by sowing discord among allies and with attempts to undermine NATO after 1949. Disinformation has historically been predominantly linked to governmental intelligence agencies but has

also been utilized by non-governmental organizations and commercial enterprises by various information channels. Over the past decade, disinformation has been deliberately spread via social media. [4] Contemporary field of disinformation studies is replete with definitions, interpretations, and conceptual deliberations. Governments, think tanks, and the academic community have devoted considerable resources to examining this phenomenon, which has become entrenched in political and daily routines. Despite numerous definitions and a degree of consensus on the concept of disinformation, ongoing theoretical discussions persist. Several factors contribute to this ongoing exploration of the realm of disinformation.

Firstly, the aims, tools, and methods of disinformation are constantly evolving, as perpetrators seek new avenues to influence and harm their identified target audiences and legitimize their actions. This necessitates further analysis and understanding of the novel elements of its operation.

Secondly, what was once a fragmented and ad hoc process of disseminating disinformation has transformed into a well-organized, well financed, and networked phenomenon serving various purposes, from sowing doubt to intensively deploying during conflicts and wars. Disinformation manifests at different levels of intensity, hence detailed and in-depth analysis could furnish frameworks for more effective countermeasures.

Thirdly, the wide spectrum of definitions surrounding disinformation can be viewed as an asset, but at the outset of large-scale projects such as AI4Debunk, there is a need to reach consensus on which concepts and approaches will serve as the research departure point. Establishing a theoretical framework for analysis to be applied across other work packages is imperative.

Fourthly, disinformation has transcended classical boundaries of specific domains and is widely utilized by policymakers and researchers alike. Thus, a thorough analysis of both the theoretical underpinnings and practical applications of the concept will contribute to constructing a coherent and comprehensive understanding of disinformation.

To systematically categorize definitions and approaches to disinformation, our examination will encompass official documents from EU member states, international organizations, think tanks, and academic studies. This comprehensive overview aims to harmonize existing perspectives and discern the most pertinent elements of the disinformation concept. Such insights will prove invaluable in the later stages of the AI4Debunk project, both theoretically and practically. Notably, thorough compilations of definitions and examples have been furnished by various entities, including the EU Disinfo Lab. [5]

A parallel endeavor has been undertaken by the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, focusing on the terminology and interpretations of various terms related to disinformation. This initiative includes the establishment of a specialized Terminology Working Group, which has released reports elucidating the essence of different terms. Presently, the group has published three reports on this subject matter. [6] This working paper will integrate diverse perspectives gleaned from previous studies to enrich the analytical framework. Its aim is to provide valuable insights for the ongoing deliberations of research teams within the AI4Debunk project.

Regarding official documents produced by EU member states, they generally fall into two broad categories. Some countries view disinformation as an integral component of a broader concept known as hybrid threats. For instance, in its document "Danish Security and Defense towards 2035", Denmark does not provide a specific definition of disinformation. Instead, it references disinformation within the framework of overarching terms such as 'hybrid threats' and 'hybrid activities': "The term [Hybrid threats] has also come to encompass a broader agenda covering very varied, non-military security policy instruments used by opponents against the West". [7] Similar approach can be monitored also in Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic stating that "Hybrid threats are coercive and subversive simultaneous activities, mostly under the threshold of a usual response (...) The most significant hybrid activity is manifested by the targeted dissemination of propaganda and disinformation against the democratic

system and the membership of the Slovak Republic in NATO and the EU”. [8] In 2021, the Czech government also approved a National Strategy for Countering Hybrid Interference. [9]

The other group of countries include the definition of disinformation in their policy documents. For instance, Belgium claims that “Disinformation is the deliberate dissemination of false, incorrect or misleading information to cause harm”. [10] The Dutch government offers a comprehensive and all-encompassing definition, effectively delineating the boundaries of the concept: “Disinformation is the deliberate, mostly covert, dissemination of misleading information with the aim of harming the public debate, democratic processes, the open and knowledge economy or public health. This means that it may affect national security. It is a form of harmful, but often legal, behaviour. Disinformation does not necessarily contain incorrect information. It may be a combination of factual, incorrect or partially incorrect information, but it is always intended to mislead people and to do harm”. [11] Similarly, France views disinformation as false information likely to disturb public order or alter the sincerity of an election, especially when disseminated deliberately and massively through online public communication services. [12]

Several countries choose definitions that do not explicitly mention the term “disinformation”. However, the substance of these interpretations and subsequent explanations aligns closely with the essence of disinformation. For instance, definition used by Greek policy makers serve as an evidence: “Anyone who publicly or via the internet spreads or disseminates false news in any way, causing fear to an indefinite number of people or to a certain circle or category of persons, who are thus forced to carry out unplanned acts or to cancel them, at the risk of cause damage to the country’s economy, tourism or defence capacity or disrupt its international relations”. [13] Concise and similar definitions are provided by the governments of the Baltic states – they all refer to intentionally dissemination of false information (Lithuania’s case) [14] but in Latvia’s and Estonia’s case [15] the meaning is expanded by adding “an intention to deceive or secure economic or political gain and which may cause public harm”. [16]

Examination of official documents from EU member states reveals that all countries have incorporated disinformation into their security policy frameworks. They collectively regard the dissemination of false information as one of the most serious threats to economic, political, and societal stability. Addressing disinformation is considered a crucial activity for safeguarding societal stability and democratic values within the EU member states. To enhance the effectiveness of these efforts, the member countries foster stronger cooperation and continuously adapt strategies for countering evolving disinformation threat. By doing so, the EU member states can better protect its citizens and maintain the integrity of its democratic institutions.

Recently, disinformation has emerged as a focal point on the agendas of international organizations, prompting the development of diverse counteraction plans. A harmonized interpretation of definitions and the implementation of mitigation tools hold the potential to mitigate the effects of disinformation and the manipulation of false information. In 2022, the UN issued the “Report of the Secretary-General: Countering Disinformation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”. [17] This report asserts that disinformation is an international phenomenon, manifesting in various forms across regions. Consequently, it emphasizes the necessity of active involvement from both governmental and non-governmental actors, as the aim of such malicious actions is to undermine the human rights and freedoms of individuals. [18]

In response to international concerns and those voiced by allies, NATO has presented its approach to disinformation arguing that: “Disinformation is false or inaccurate information that a hostile actor uses deliberately to deceive people. Usually, disinformation seeks to stir up a particular strong emotion (anger, fear, disgust) and override rational and critical thinking in the intended target”. [19] NATO’s approach to disinformation encompasses a comprehensive interpretation, which includes an emotional component aimed at diminishing the role of rational arguments. The primary objective of those disseminating false

information is to undermine reality and facts. Additionally, NATO emphasizes the importance of addressing target groups when identifying the effects of disinformation.

The EU has identified disinformation as one of the primary threats to democracy in Europe, requiring concrete actions to mitigate its potential impact. One such document, the Action Plan Against Disinformation adopted in 2018 outlines specific measures to combat disinformation, in line with the EU Digital Act which forces online platforms to act against disinformation. Notably, since the adoption of the plan predates Russia's war against Ukraine, it views the spread of false information through the lens of comprehensive security, highlighting economic, societal, and environmental aspects: "Disinformation is understood as verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm. Public harm includes threats to democratic processes as well as to public goods such as Union citizens' health, environment or security". [20]

Similarly, the European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP) defines disinformation as "verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented, and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm".[21] This includes threats to democratic political processes, public goods such as health, the environment, or security. The plan emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach, involving not just legislative measures but also collaboration across society, enhancing media literacy, and improving transparency and accountability of online platforms.

In addition, the European Strategic Compass underscores the importance of tackling disinformation within the broader scope of hybrid threats. It stresses the need for enhanced capabilities to detect, analyse, and respond to disinformation as part of the EU's security and defence strategy.[22] The Report on Foreign Interference in EU Democratic Processes further elaborates on the significant threat posed by disinformation, particularly from foreign actors. It calls for robust measures to counter these threats, including improved situational awareness, training for public administrations, and dedicated frameworks for rapid detection and response to disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI).[23] The European External Action Service report for 2023 on FIMI highlights the growing threat of disinformation and emphasize the need for a comprehensive EU response. This includes cross-sectoral collaboration, strengthened regulatory frameworks, and media literacy initiatives to enhance the EU's resilience against these hybrid threats.[24]

The concerted efforts reflected in these documents demonstrate the EU's comprehensive approach to tackling disinformation. Disinformation is increasingly being contextualized within FIMI, underscoring its integral role in hybrid threats. Enhanced cooperation, continuous strategy adaptation, and robust regulatory frameworks are essential to effectively mitigate the impact of disinformation and FIMI on democratic institutions and societal cohesion.

The think tank community has been rigorously investigating various aspects of disinformation, blending theoretical and practical perspectives to form a cohesive conceptual framework. The definitions and interpretations put forth by this community largely encompass the same elements as those found in policy-relevant documents. Thus, experts from RAND Corporation emphasize the following components: "False or misleading information spread intentionally, usually to achieve some political or economic objective, influence public attitudes, or hide the truth (a synonym for propaganda)".[25] Experts from the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) echo similar views while also emphasizing the underlying intentions that contribute to causing harm[26]. A more detailed definition is provided by experts from the Centre for European Policy Analysis. They broaden the scope beyond mere information, encompassing narratives, images, and the specific target audience. The disinformation from their perspective could be defined as "... the intentional use of falsehoods, narratives, and images by malicious actors to mislead targeted populations".[27]

The concept of disinformation has garnered significant attention within the academic sphere, drawing interest from disciplines such as political science, communication, sociology, psychology, and

history. Scholars have extensively examined how the dissemination of false information can influence the beliefs and behaviours of individuals and groups. As articulated by Hernon, “Disinformation is false information, spread deliberately with the intention to mislead and/or deceive”.[28] This definition is foundational and widely cited in academic literature.[29]

Similarly, Fetzer has elaborated that “Disinformation entails the distribution, assertion, or dissemination of false, mistaken, or misleading information in an intentional, deliberate, or purposeful effort to mislead, deceive, or confuse”.[30] Historically, analytical perspectives on disinformation have not consistently viewed it through the lens of warfare. Fetzer contends that while disinformation may deceive or confuse, it does not inherently cause public harm. However, recent studies underscore the potential harm associated with disinformation, highlighting its detrimental effects on society. Consequently, the conceptualization of disinformation has evolved in light of contemporary practices. For instance, a group of scholars has proposed an expanded definition, asserting that disinformation encompasses “... all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information intentionally designed, presented, and promoted to cause public harm or for profit”.[31]

Rubén Arcos et al. observe that “disinformation-related activities can be part of wider hybrid threats and warfare; information and cyberspace emerge as domains of operations, and battlefields of information warfare”.[32] Similarly, Nathalie Van Raemdonck and Trisha Meyer emphasize that disinformation, as a hybrid threat, fundamentally challenges the core of democracy, while also highlighting the secondary threats posed by responses to disinformation and referencing historical developments leading to this stage.[33] Additionally, Radoslav Ivanchik and Pavel Necas conclude that in the first two decades of the new millennium, the widespread use of information and communication technologies has significantly transformed all areas of contemporary human society—political, social, economic, technological, and security domains. This “internetization” has created new opportunities for sharing information but has also enabled the misuse of modern technologies and media to spread false information for political, economic, or other gains, posing a dangerous threat as part of hybrid threats or hybrid warfare.[34]

Expanding on these perspectives, Jowett and O'Donnell discuss the strategic use of disinformation and propaganda/persuasion, noting that it can be deliberately crafted to appear as though it originates from credible sources, thus increasing its potential impact.[35] This aligns with the views of Benkler, Faris, and Roberts, who argue that disinformation is often intertwined with media manipulation tactics aimed at shaping public perception and opinion.[36] Furthermore, researchers like Pennycook and Rand have explored the psychological mechanisms behind the spread of disinformation, indicating that cognitive biases and heuristics play significant roles in how individuals process and share false information.[37]

The onset of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has spurred the development of more refined academic definitions and a deeper understanding of disinformation. Scholars have identified several critical aspects: disinformation involves the deliberate creation and dissemination of false and misleading narratives, aimed at deceiving or confusing target audiences. These narratives are designed to cause public harm, social unrest, and conflicts. Malicious actors utilize strategic and emotional manipulation techniques, leveraging various technological tools to amplify their impact. This multifaceted approach poses a significant threat to democratic societies and the stability of democratic political systems.

Before proceeding, it is essential to clarify that, within the context of this study, we will adopt the European Union's definition of disinformation, which highlights its intentional and manipulative characteristic: “Disinformation is understood as verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm. Public harm includes threats to democratic processes as well as to public goods such as Union citizens' health, environment or security”.[38]

Given the complexity of disinformation, interdisciplinary approaches are essential. Integrating insights from political science, communication studies, psychology, and technology is crucial for developing comprehensive counterstrategies.

2 IDENTIFYING DISINFORMATION THREADS – Žaneta Ozoliņa, Sigita Struberga, Alessia D’Andrea, Arianna D’Ulizia

Disinformation threads refer to interconnected narratives or chains of false or misleading information deliberately disseminated across various platforms or social media channels.[39] The interconnection of these narratives constitutes a critical tactic for misleading recipients, complicating fact-checking processes and creating the necessary background for deceiving and manipulating public opinion. Disinformation threads utilize multiple forms of content, including posts, articles, videos, or memes, which are designed to reinforce one another and create a semblance of credibility or consensus around the false information. Consequently, these threads serve specific political, social, or economic objectives.

The complexity and diversity of disinformation threads necessitate a multifaceted and multilayered approach, as disinformation, fake news, or propaganda can have direct and identifiable targets and aims.[40] However, disinformation also varies in intensity, impact, duration, and scope of dissemination, making it challenging to counter effectively.

To develop a comprehensive approach for the AI4Debunk project, we outline the primary elements of disinformation threads that can be applied in analysing the extensive set of facts and case studies gathered by research teams. Focusing on only one or a few elements of disinformation may mislead the analysis from the focal point or result in miscalculating the potential impact on political stability, societal resilience and individual well-being. Moreover, underestimating the complexity of disinformation threads can undermine trust in institutions, foster social division leading to civil unrest, and potentially impact election outcomes.

In order to arrive at a comprehensive approach, we propose the following set of disinformation threads, which will allow to provide in-depth analysis of different components of this phenomenon: **context, content, information sources and following the thread, credibility, target audience and engagement metrics, and impact.**

2.1 CONTEXT

Interpreting context in research literature is a fundamental aspect of understanding the significance and implications of the findings presented. Context refers to the circumstances or conditions surrounding a particular phenomenon, including social, cultural, historical, environmental and situational factors that may influence how individuals and groups perceive, understand and respond to stimuli (in our case disinformation).[41] Reaction to disinformation, fake news or propaganda does not depend entirely on media literacy and knowledge about the information unit but on a wide range of diverse circumstances. Contextual features become increasingly relevant when social media platforms play the leading role in providing wide spectrum of information, including disinformation.[42] In the situations when individuals

or groups search for either supporting narratives, references or relations to a particular set of information, context could become either a guide or motive to affiliate with one or another group of views. At the same time focus on contextual features can assist in detecting and identifying credibility of presented information or disinformation[43], as well as introducing effective corrective interventions in social media. Furthermore, it is essential to analyse different categories of context in correlation, identifying which contextual features exert a dominant effect on the target audience, which narratives align with the adversary's content mainstream, and the linguistic peculiarities (e.g., slang, swearing, imprisonment lexicon, etc.), among other factors.

In social sciences, the following contexts are considered relevant in analysing disinformation, fake news, and propaganda:

Historical Context: Historical background provides insights into the evolution of certain factors over time and their ongoing influence on current conditions. Historical context influences political institutions, social movements, and patterns of conflict and cooperation, and it provides insights into long-term trajectories and patterns of change. History plays a significant role in different disinformation campaigns, which often challenge and criticize commonly accepted historical facts. Reinterpretation of history to align with ideological interests, constructing an imagined reality for domestic consumption and pursuing imperialistic foreign policy goals is one of the most often used tactics.

Cultural Context: Cultural norms, values, and practices influence various aspects of social life, including economics, politics, decision-making, societal relations, and even foreign and security policies. Involves shared beliefs, values, symbols, and practices within a society or community. Cultural context shapes political identity, ideology, and collective action, and it influences political discourse, rhetoric, and legitimacy. Cultural context impacts disinformation through the selection of artists participating in disinformation efforts, financing cultural events that contextualize fake news, and supporting humour shows that replicate specific narratives, among other methods.

Social Context: This encompasses factors such as demographics, societal norms and values, and social structures, which characterize relationships and dynamics within communities, societies, and the diaspora abroad. In examining different disinformation campaigns, it is essential to identify the primary target groups and understand their roles and positions within the overall social structure. Social context shapes political attitudes, behaviour, and mobilization, and influences the distribution of power and resources within society.

Economic Context: The economic system, encompassing wealth distribution, access to resources, and employment opportunities, forms the foundation of the state and society, and can serve as a favourable precondition for disinformation campaigns. For instance, the limited EU economic sanctions against Russia since 2014 have been extensively leveraged for various purposes. These include creating news items about reforming Russia's economy based on self-sufficiency, supporting "national companies," and ridiculing Western actions.

Political Context: Understanding the political context is crucial for grasping the construction, dissemination, and influence of disinformation threads. The political landscape, governance structures, policies, and regulations provide insight into the political factors that affect target groups. Analysing the political context in which disinformation, fake news, and propaganda narratives are constructed helps in understanding the adversary's intentions and goals. Therefore, disinformation is considered to be one of

the most effective tools, which challenges democratic values and democratic political regime, trust in political institutions, international rules and norms.

Global Context: closely related to political context and demonstrates attitudes towards globalization trends, participation in international organizations, international relations at large, transnational networks, level of international engagement and solidarity, and respect to global norms. All the above mentioned factors shape domestic policy choices, security concerns, and diplomatic relations.

By carefully interpreting the context across these dimensions, it is possible to gain a more nuanced understanding how disinformation, fake news and propaganda work and what are implications.

2.2 CONTENT

Understanding the core message is critical in identifying whether the dissemination of information is driven by a political agenda, financial incentives, ideological biases, or mere hooliganism aimed at creating social disorder. This process involves analysing both the explicit and implicit messages within the content, as well as scrutinizing the motivations of those propagating it.

Disinformation campaigns typically have strategic objectives, which may include swaying public opinion on political issues, undermining trust in institutions, promoting regime change, advancing specific ideologies, securing financial gain, or generating an emotional impact to set the stage for further campaigns. The content of these messages often contains false information and emotionally charged components, such as fear, anger, or outrage, designed to provoke a response. By examining the emotional tone, one can often uncover manipulative intent. For instance, disinformation related to elections frequently includes false claims intended to delegitimize certain candidates or erode public confidence in the electoral process. A pertinent example is the malign information operations conducted by the Russian Federation aimed at undermining confidence in U.S. or European election systems.[44] The ultimate goal may also be to sow division within society and fuel social unrest, with content crafted to exacerbate existing social, political, or cultural tensions, thereby driving a wedge between different groups.

The relationship between the context and content of disinformation is also crucial, especially when assessing the potential impact. It is essential to determine whether a particular message can be framed within multiple contexts and adapted according to a strategic goal, and whether it supports or amplifies other similar narratives, thereby multiplying its impact.

The interpretation of a disinformation message can vary significantly depending on language and tone. The same message, when communicated in different languages, such as Russian and English, can carry different connotations—not due to poor translation, but because of differences in tone and context.[45] Language in disinformation efforts often employs various manipulation techniques, such as repetition, false dilemmas, appeals to the common man, or appeals to authority.

Disinformation content often includes visual elements, which can significantly amplify the impact of the original message. Misleading images, memes, or videos are commonly used, along with symbols, logos, or visual cues that may falsely imply official endorsement or credibility. The use of deepfakes is another tactic that has been extensively employed to support disinformation narratives and manipulate public opinion.

When analysing the content of a disinformation message, it is important to determine whether it includes any call to action, urging the audience to share the content, participate in an event, or adopt a particular viewpoint or behaviour, which could lead to unrest. Such scenarios may prompt adversaries to interfere in the domestic affairs of a foreign country, justifying their actions under the guise of "protecting the rights" of certain population groups.

Answering to the question if we can automatically and accurately classify information as containing disinformation and being part of disinformation thread enables us to differentiate it from other types of benign information. There are several algorithms to verify information, to provide series of classifiers used in research to examine intentionality of the disinformation[46], linguistic clues exhibited by disinformation, to analyse "clickbaityness", and to perform fine-grained, veracity-based content classification through a natural language inference module for automated disinformation verification[47], as well as do other relevant activities to find evidence supporting identification of information as false either manually or automatically.

Key questions to analyse the content are as follows:

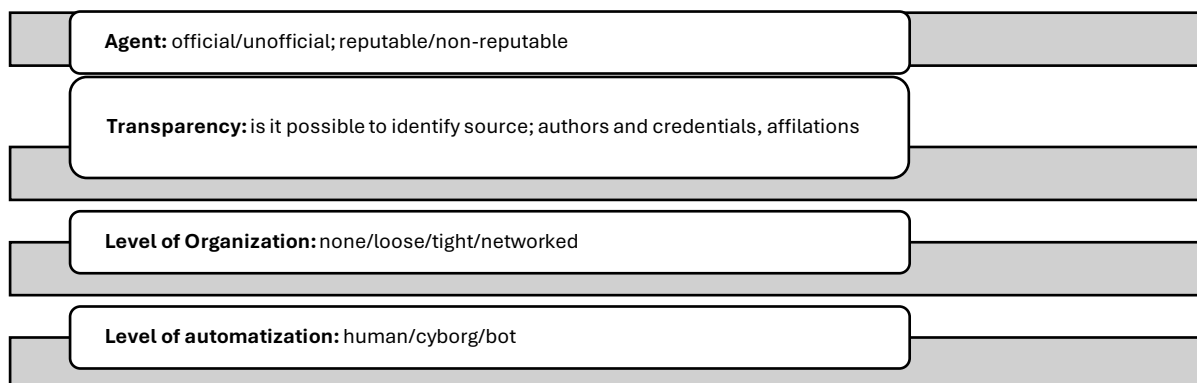
What core message is being conveyed?	
Is the information provided factual, or does it contain misleading or manipulated data and if it aims to harm or mislead?	
Is there a clear political agenda?	
Are there financial incentives?	[48]

Thus, by analysing the core message and its motives, we can enable us for further unpacking reasoning of the disinformation spread and assess the potential harm it may cause.

2.3 INFORMATION SOURCES AND FOLLOWING THE THREAD

Understanding and mitigating the spread of disinformation requires a comprehensive analysis of information threads, focusing on their origins, dissemination methods, and amplification mechanisms. This process is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing on tools and methods from data science, social network analysis, linguistics, and information theory. A central goal in here is to identify the credibility of information sources, distinguishing reliable data from manipulated or false narratives. This helps in determining whether the information is trusted or if it might be part of a disinformation thread, larger disinformation campaign, or malign information operation.

The first step in analysis is an evaluation if the source as such or sources spreading information unit or set of narratives. Taking in consideration that the disinformation is often designed to mimic legitimate sources, it might be challenging to discern its authenticity. To overcome it, evaluation of the source requires addressing key questions about the primary origin of the information, the channels and methods through which it spreads, and the role of automation in its amplification.



[49]

According to the EU External Action Service—the body responsible for developing the FIMI Toolbox—hostile foreign actors aim to manipulate information environments to achieve political, security, or other strategic goals.[50] These activities can be carried out by both state and non-state actors. Disinformation, as one of the methods of FIMI, is disseminated by these actors through various channels, ranging from offline and traditional media to online news platforms and social media, involving complex interactions across multiple spaces.

At the same time, disinformation campaigns are not confined to hostile foreign actors; they also involve local ideological groups and activist networks, with state and non-state actors sometimes working in tandem [51]. Evidence shows that the same disinformation campaigns may advocate for multiple sides of political issues, making it harder to detect the role of state actors, or sometimes there are even no state actors involved at all. These campaigns often exploit existing narratives, blurring political or social divisions to achieve strategic goals. For example, state actors may amplify disinformation created by activist groups, leveraging it for broader geopolitical objectives. Human influencers play a pivotal role in spreading disinformation due to their ability to engage audiences and build trust, often more effectively than automated bots [52].

Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are the primary vectors for disinformation. According to Seb Butcher, “social media is the primary vector of disinformation online, and with nearly 5 billion of us now using these platforms, public opinion is widely vulnerable to manipulation”.[53] Amplification often begins with obscure or smaller sources, gaining momentum through larger accounts and viral sharing. Algorithms exacerbate this process by prioritizing content that generates high engagement, creating a feedback loop that rapidly expands the reach of disinformation. Additionally, blogs, forums, and even once-reputable news outlets can inadvertently or deliberately become agents of disinformation, further complicating the landscape. According to the EU Disinfo Lab, “a tendency that calls for media accountability is the case of once reputable news agencies or journalists that – deliberately or not – go from transmitters of information to agents of disinformation” or the case of “online “media” outlets pretending to be conventional ones “posing to spread disinformation, which includes for instance coordinated disinformation campaigns”.[54]

Sometimes disinformation is initially disseminated by small, unknown sources but gains momentum through larger accounts or media platforms. Tracking amplifiers involves influencer

identification and re-sharing patterns. Here, for example, such entities as influencers might play a key role in this process due to their broad reach and ability to build trust with their followers. Disinformation can be effectively spread through these influencers, who may either intentionally or unintentionally promote misleading content under the guise of opinion or entertainment. And “the more they talk about it, the more people ‘like’ and share what they have to say, leading algorithms to recommend their content even more”[55]. These influencers are not held to the same journalistic standards as traditional media outlets, which makes them an effective instrument for disinformation spread.

Tracking and analysing disinformation threads requires advanced tools and techniques. Technical analyses of infrastructure, including domain registrations, SSL certificates, and hosting configurations, can reveal disinformation sites that may visually resemble legitimate news sources. For example, Austin Hounsell et. al. state that while disinformation websites may visually resemble legitimate news sources, there are notable technical differences in aspects such as domain registrations, TLS/SSL certificates, and web hosting configurations. These infrastructure features are especially useful for detecting disinformation sites early, as they can be analysed before any content is published or reaches the audience, allowing for proactive identification.[56]

Social network analysis offers insights into the structure of disinformation networks, identifying key actors and the flow of information. These tools also help distinguish between human-driven content and bot-driven amplification, with technologies like Botometer providing a means to assess automated activities. Taking in consideration extend of the automatic presence, it is crucial to clearly define their role and place in the spread of disinformation threads. For example, Vosoughi et al., who examined the role of Twitter users in spreading fake news, found that disinformation often spread further and faster than factual news due to certain "super-spreaders" within the network, which might be both- either humans or bots.[57] As suggested by Glesser et al., in most cases the bots are information multipliers and less often content creators.[58]

There are several ways how to identify automatized activity. One of such instruments is so called Botometer. It “is a supervised machine learning classifier that assesses the likelihood of an account being a bot using different features derived from the account, the friendship network, and different linguistic features” [59]. Thus, it enables to separate human activities from automated ones. Thus, this approach enables not only to identify multiple actors involved in the spread of the disinformation threads, but also to detect key actors in disinformation networks.

Working with human-generated content often reverts to traditional methods of evaluating credibility. At the operational level, it shares several processes with other disinformation detection efforts- those, which are mentioned above and other similar ones. Thus, by following the thread of how disinformation spreads, we can often trace it back to its origins or at least understand how coordinated efforts are used to influence larger audiences, since not always the initial author or the source of the disinformation thread will be easy to identify. At the same time, recognizing patterns of amplification helps us expose coordinated efforts that aim to distort reality and manipulate perceptions, making it easier to counteract these campaigns in real time. This recognition of the amplification patterns helps us expose coordinated efforts that aim to distort reality and manipulate perceptions, making it easier to counteract these campaigns in real time or even to do preventive recognition of potential disinformation sources.

To conclude, other methods for identifying information sources of disinformation may exist; however, the underlying analytical process is likely to follow a similar logic and address the same categories outlined above.

2.4 CREDIBILITY

In recent years, linguistic analysis has significantly contributed to the recognition and prevention of disinformation campaigns. Although the phenomenon of disinformation presents a multifactorial complexity, the analysis of linguistic and lexical structures can help detect that news created to mislead and manipulate public opinion. Different branches of linguistics, through various methodologies, have investigated the presence of specific linguistic indicators in deceptive news, which can be interpreted as “predictive deception cues”.[60]

A critical comparison of the literature that has focused on the linguistic analysis of unreliable textual news (articles and/or social network posts) will allow us to highlight those linguistic indicators that have proven to be statistically significant for the identification of deceptive news. It is essential to keep in mind that content indicators, but especially context indicators are characterized by a high variability, as they rapidly evolve in concomitance with social changes and growing information saturation.[61] However, there are recurring linguistic patterns that can constitute a useful reference framework for reporting potential unreliable news, even through automated systems. Nevertheless, it is essential that such reports always undergo a careful human evaluation, in order to avoid hasty conclusions and ensure an accurate analysis.

The title is certainly one of the primary textual elements that is useful to examine when looking for linguistic spies. The change in the ways news is consumed, in particular the transition from traditional media to online platforms, has had a significant impact on reading habits. Today, reading information is characterized by greater speed and superficiality: users seem to have developed a growing tendency to read the title alone without further investigation of the content of the article.[62] This evolution has made the title an interesting text itself for analysis because it is knowingly used by the authors of unreliable content. Unlike those aimed at clicking bait, typical of marketing, in the titles of deceptive news of political or social nature it is possible to find characteristics that reflect specific disinformation techniques, which are typical of the argumentative context in which they operate. Specifically, in these cases the title tends to be longer than those of authentic news, as it tries to condense the information necessary for a simple and easily understandable message without requiring further analysis. Consequently, the information density of disinformative titles is strategically designed to offer rapid and immediate access. Therefore, the title already includes everything the author wants the user to know, so the complete article does not usually comprehend more in-depth information.[63] From a lexical point of view, disinformative titles are characterized by a small presence of function words and a higher concentration of keywords, mainly from the commonly used vocabulary. Furthermore, a significant frequency of names and verbal expressions is observed, which suggests a focus on specific individuals and actions, helping to create a sense of urgency and a more direct connection with the reader. This structure is consistent with the peripheral route to persuasion model outlined in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), widely studied in the field of persuasive communication. According to the ELM, persuasion occurs through two paths: a central one,

based on a deep and rational elaboration of the message, and a peripheral one, which uses simple and immediate heuristics.[64] Deceptive news tends to exploit the latter mechanism, playing on superficial and emotional signals to induce the reader to a rapid and unconsidered reaction. Another relevant element of analysis is the representativeness of the title compared to the content of the article. The studies by Zhang et al. and Carvalho et al. have highlighted that a title strictly faithful to the text of the article it refers to increases the probability that the news is authentic.[65] Although representativeness is not the most decisive indicator of credibility, it obtained a significant relevance, suggesting that, in many cases, titles well correlated to the inner content can be used as a signal of authenticity of the news itself. Focusing on texts of articles or considering the news conveyed through a post, a highly relevant element useful to identify an implausible news is definitely its level of emotional intensity. In fact, as in the title, even in a larger portion of text, Carvalho et al. study shows that alternative news uses emotive language three times more than authentic news.[66] Using the sentiment analysis tool, another relevant aspect is the correlation between emotionally marked words and those with positive or negative connotations. The analyses show that texts of deceptive news tend to be more negatively oriented. The presence of strong emotional intensity in news is an important indicator of unreliability, as it differs greatly from the deontological principles of journalistic writing, which tend to be as neutral and objective as possible. Despite this, an automatic analysis of this indicator has not yet given entirely satisfactory results. In fact, although the amount of emotional linguistic markers in the text may seem irrelevant, even a single sentence markedly negative can strongly influence the reader's emotional perception.[67]

The presence of emotional markers is therefore also consistent with the peripheral route to persuasion model, which plays on emotional and superficial elements rather than an elaborate and more thoughtful reasoning. Thus, another aspect to take into consideration is what we could define as "logos", referring to the concept of credibility label similar to the nutritional one proposed in the work of Gollub et al.[68] and Vincentius et al.[69], but enriching it with other elements analysed in the studies by Zhang et al.[70] and Carvalho et al.[71]. By "logos" it is meant the focus on all the persuasive features of a text whose presence or absence determines the credibility of an article. Specifically, internal inferences with logical arguments supported by scientific or single studies are signs of highly trustworthy articles. On the contrary, arguments that appeal to fear rather than rationality or that reduce complexity in a dichotomous form without the possibility of alternatives and encourage actions are significant indicators of low trustworthiness. These expedients together with other less significant ones have been classified as "fallacies".[72]

On the syntactic and semantic level, linguistic analysis has produced significant results thanks to the use of methods typical of forensic linguistics, which are here integrated with other branches of linguistics to offer a broader and more systematic picture. From a syntactic point of view, one of the distinctive elements found in news with a low credibility rate is the strategic use of the theme-rheme structure, often aimed to create sensational effects, rather than ensuring clarity and comprehensibility.[73] Another syntactic device is the use of relative clauses, used to describe ordinary people in detail, often with the aim of enriching the text with apparently credible information, but difficult to verify.[74] These clauses are combined with a more frequent use of other subordinate clauses, again in contrast with the traditional journalistic approach, which tends to favour information density through nominal sentences that are primarily observed in reliable news. Deceptive news, on the other hand, distributes information over several sentences, giving only the illusion of an enriched text, but in reality,

reducing its clarity and amount of information. Finally, an aspect observed in several studies is the extensive use of the passive voice, which allows to manipulate the visibility of the agent. In particular, the passive construction can be used for two main purposes: to emphasize or hide the agent, depending on the narrative. Specifically, when the verbal action is negatively connoted and the subject of the action is perceived as an opposing party, the agent is made explicit, in order to emphasize responsibility and encouraging feelings of anger against it. On the contrary, the agent can be omitted to hide responsibility when it does not benefit the creator of the news, thus creating ambiguity and limiting the reader's ability to verify the facts. This linguistic strategy, widely used in unreliable news, allows to manipulate the interpretation of events, favouring specific interests and hiding or highlighting information selectively.[75]

From a lexical and semantic point of view, news with low credibility shows a marked ambiguity and vagueness. This phenomenon is manifested through a choice of unspecific vocabulary and a deliberately imprecise construction of meaning. Text vagueness is also emphasized by several linguistic indicators, including the excessive use of personal pronouns instead of specific nouns. Although pronouns are useful tools for ensuring textual cohesion and coherence, their excessive use can also compromise the clarity and accuracy of the text, making the references between agent and action difficult to follow for the reader. Rashkin et al. also showed that less reliable news tends to contain a higher frequency of first and second person pronouns.[76] Another linguistic indicator regarding the lexicon is the use of hedging words. These expressions, such as *claims* in a statement or downtoners, such as *slightly*, *somewhat*, and *a bit*, serve to tone down the intensity of the statements, thus creating an effect of detachment or indecision of the writer.[77] Although the use of such terms is consistent with psychological theories suggesting that deceivers tend to use indirect and non-definitive expressions[78], in subsequent studies by Zhang et al.[79] and Carvalho et al.[80] the annotators gave to uncertainty signals a high credibility value. However, the credibility value assigned by the experts in the two studies is in line with deception theories. Therefore, lexical forms of uncertainty and attenuation do not represent definitive indicators of deception themselves. Rather, it is the management of such uncertainty that affects the overall perception of credibility. In fact, the uncertainty in inauthentic news is counterbalanced by the equally significant presence of evaluative and emphatic adverbs that intensify reality, whereas there is an almost total absence of adverbs of place and time, which are instead common in reliable news.

In line with the results of sentiment analysis, low credibility news is characterized by the common use of adjectives, which confer a highly subjective and evaluative approach. This style clearly contrasts with traditional journalistic writing techniques which, as already mentioned, encourage an impartial and objective narration. A further linguistic indicator is the intensive use of superlatives, compared to authentic news which tend to use more comparatives, numerical data and precise statistics. These are in fact characteristic elements of reliable journalistic writing because they serve to contextualize and verify information, reducing subjectivity and promoting an understanding based on concrete evidence. On the contrary, the prevalence of adjectives and superlatives highlights a writing that aims to emphasize and manipulate reality, playing on sensationalism and emotion to capture the public's attention.[81]

2.5 TARGET AUDIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT METRICS

Up until now, we have focused on the linguistic indicators thanks to which disinformation can be identified, understood as false or misleading information, intentionally spread to deceive the public. However, the true power of disinformation cannot be fully understood without analysing the ways in which it is spread. This is a phenomenon that, with the advent of digital platforms, has undergone radical transformations, to the point that in 2013, the World Economic Forum (2013) included it among global risks, equating it to threats such as terrorism.[82] In that period, the full extent of the problem was not yet fully perceived, but it had already become clear that the optimistic vision of informational pluralism, anticipated initially by the advent of the Internet and then by social networks, was crumbling.

In the past, communication through traditional media, such as newspapers, radio, and television, followed a one-way model characterized by a "one-to-many" ($1 \rightarrow n$) relationship, where a few centralized senders diffused information to a large number of receivers. With the beginning of social media, this paradigm was radically transformed into a "many-to-many" ($n \leftrightarrow n$) model, where every user can be producer and consumer of information. This decentralization of communication allowed more people to become sources of information themselves and to spread it without intermediaries, initially promoting the idea of the democratization of information. However, this process did not lead to the desired results. What dynamics concurred into making a process of informative pluralism a global threat? The answer lies in the logics governing new media distribution and in the way they reinforce our most natural cognitive processes, hence generating an unprecedented combination in the history of communication.

A crucial aspect to examine is the enormous amount of data daily generated by Internet users, often unconsciously, through the acceptance of privacy policies that rarely are carefully read and offer varying levels of protection. The advent of Big Data has radically transformed many sectors, particularly marketing, allowing larger investments in communication campaigns. The growing hybridization between marketing and politics, known as "political marketing", has expanded the use of Big Data to electoral campaigns and, inevitably, to disinformation campaigns.[83]

In-depth analysis of Big Data allows the optimization of various types of campaigns—whether they involve marketing, awareness, politics, or disinformation—by studying the detailed behaviours and emotions of specific audience segments. In the past, messages were distributed through channels that forced communication to a broad and undifferentiated audience, inevitably leading to wasted resources. The evolution of digital technologies made possible to segment audiences into micro-targets, investing in a specific manner to reach only definite groups. This segmentation has significantly increased communicative effectiveness, as it allows messages to be tailored to the specific emotional triggers of each micro-target and to be spread through channels selected based on precise socio-demographic coordinates[84][85]. A significant example of this strategy is the Russian disinformation campaign during the war in Ukraine, where messages and distribution channels were chosen based on four distinct target groups, adapting the narrative to the specific characteristics of each.[86] Micro-targeting thus proves to be a powerful tool for identifying segments of the population interested in certain topics, analysing their behaviours, and delivering highly targeted messages. However, micro-targeting alone is not enough to explain the process of disinformation diffusion, which instead exploits organic mechanisms within digital

platforms that play on our mental processes and lead users to become not only recipients of disinformation but also secondary promoters of disinformation through misinformation.[87]

To understand how the structure of social networks profoundly influences our behaviour, it is essential to consider the concept of "confirmation bias". This cognitive bias causes our minds to reject information that conflicts with our value system or worldview, while accepting and reinforcing news and information that confirms our beliefs. Confirmation bias is an economic cognitive process that facilitates quick decision-making and day-to-day processing. This phenomenon finds particularly fertile ground in virtual environments, where the structure based on cookies, fingerprinting, and algorithms tends to create a space that reflects and amplifies the user's expectations. The combination of this mechanism with the structures of digital platforms has created complex virtual environments, such as echo chambers, where people are exposed exclusively to information, opinions, and points of view that confirm and reinforce their beliefs, primarily interacting with individuals who share those convictions.[88]

Echo chambers have demonstrated that social networks tend to close users off in informational bubbles. Studies on user behaviour have revealed that greater exposure and activity on social media do not lead to expanded interaction with different communities but rather to further isolation within one's group.[89] This isolation within bubbles, where only narratives shared by homophilic users circulate, feeds and consolidates polarization, which in turn manifests as the strengthening of pre-existing beliefs and as increasing division between groups with opposing views. Once the presence of echo chambers is identified, studying their impact on the spread of misinformation becomes of great interest. The model proposed by Petter Törnberg (2018) suggests that echo chambers, defined as clusters of users with polarized opinions and high internal connectivity, facilitate the spread of disinformation more effectively than unsegmented networks.[90] In particular, research shows that news from such clusters tends to propagate more widely due to the inherent virality of these isolated groups. The observed effect is twofold. On the one hand, internal polarization increases virality up to a certain level ($P_n = 0.6$), making information more persuasive within the cluster, as the high connection between users reinforces the credibility and diffusion of the content. On the other hand, when polarization reaches a critical point, the further isolation of the cluster begins to limit dissemination outside of it, reducing overall virality. This dynamic suggests that, although some polarization can accelerate diffusion, excessive isolation can limit its overall effectiveness. The model indicates that echo chambers not only amplify the spread within homogeneous groups but also influence global dissemination through a "bandwagon" effect, where the accumulated consensus within the cluster influences external nodes.

This phenomenon of diffusion is not specific of disinformation but deeply rooted in the structure of social media and thus applicable to any information. However, the study titled *Understanding engagement with U.S. (mis)information news sources on Facebook* by Edelson et al. demonstrated, through the analysis of engagement metrics, that disinformative posts tend to generate higher engagement compared to content from reliable sources, with significant differences depending on political leanings.[91] This phenomenon can be further understood in light of the percentage of emotional intensity present in disinformative news, already discussed earlier. News that provokes strong emotional reactions, such as anger and indignation, is amplified by social media algorithms, which prioritize content capable of altering and increasing user engagement.[92]

The logic behind this dynamic is that social media aim to keep users on their platforms to maximize profits. But why does it work? Once again, the answer lies outside digital platforms but consolidates within

them. One aspect to consider is “peer pressure”. The research conducted by social psychologist Solomon Asch demonstrated that the presence of other individuals, unlike an isolated context, significantly influences our behaviour.[93] Echo chambers, where not only like-minded people but also friends and family are present, amplify this social pressure, transforming it into a desire for conformity and approval within the group. The tools through which the user seeks and obtains the desired approval are engagement metrics, commonly used by every social network. Among these, “likes” are indicators of social approval that consolidate the sense of community and mutual support; comments reflect and amplify polarization, contributing to the construction of a collective identity based on homophily, with appreciative comments reinforcing the group and negative comments setting the group against outsiders in an identity dynamic of “us vs. them”; finally, shares act as social validators, practically contributing to the spread of misinformation.[94]

Engagement metrics, and in particular the sharing function, generate the bandwagon effect, a phenomenon where an individual tends to adopt a particular opinion or behaviour following the increase in the number of people doing so. This effect, widely studied in the context of marketing, also manifests in the spread of disinformation. As exposure to a piece of news increases, the process of acceptance grows, and consequently, the propensity to share it, which leads to further exposure of other nodes within the network.[95] Despite significant efforts to develop effective solutions against disinformation, including automated detection techniques, research conducted by Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler has highlighted that fact-checking and, consequently, debunking not only fail to change opinions but can even trigger a boomerang effect, known as the “backfire effect”. [96] This phenomenon, particularly relevant among ideologically aligned users, contributes to the radicalization of positions, strengthening initial beliefs rather than altering them.

Considering what has been discussed so far, one might wonder whether continuing to frame the research in dichotomous terms, such as true/false or right/wrong, is contributing to the problem rather than offering a solution.

2.6 IMPACT

The way in which disinformation campaigns spread in digital dynamics raises the legitimate question of whether, and to what extent, these processes have evident consequences in the real world. This question is not easy to answer, since the immediate cause-effect relations are not always easily traceable (as in the case of elections) and, perhaps, they are not even the main object to investigate in order to obtain an answer. The solution may lie in observing the consequences of disinformation campaigns as part of a systemic process, rather than sequential. In this sense, it is useful to draw on studies in this field from different perspectives and disciplines, which “are often entirely complementary windows into a much larger process”. [97]

As illustrated in the previous paragraph, the field of cognitive science has shifted its focus from the idea of the rational man towards a model of man who uses heuristics to simplify decision-making problems and reduce cognitive load. This approach perfectly aligns with the structure of social media, which exploit the confirmation bias mechanisms, inducing individuals to search and find information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs, while tending to ignore contrary ones.[98] As a result, truth loses

importance, giving space to a fragmented reality, which has been defined as the “post-truth era”. Each person’s “truth” develops within their own echo chamber, fostering a polarization of opinions. This polarization is not created by social networks, but is amplified by them, transforming society into a place of constant tension of poles, which do not open to comparison, but strengthen their identity of belonging to the group in an “us vs. them” mechanism.[99]

As several studies have argued, the hostility of online interactions is a key factor in explaining the escalation of affective polarization. Specifically, partisan criticisms intensify the in-group's identity climate, leading to a more pronounced distance from the out-group and fostering distorted perceptions of its members.[100]

Such affective polarization is a tool that certainly has not gone unnoticed by certain segments of society. In a context where the collection of information about behaviours and needs has become less difficult (see the Cambridge Analytica case) and where the absence of mainstream media allows everyone to become an information source, it is not surprising that previously marginalized entities have now accessed large communication spaces and are using them to spread distrust in institutions and in traditional media, which are considered the cause of their marginalization.[101] As highlighted in the study by Jennings et al. about the consequences of the proliferation of disinformation during the covid-19 pandemic, distrust towards the political system and its members goes often with feelings of insecurity, contempt, fear and anger that can translate into defiance, support for populist challenge.[102]

As Peter Pomerantsev points out, it is therefore not surprising that: “Across the world, from the US to the UK, from Europe to South Asia and Latin America, politics and the media are caught in a spiral that enhances divisive rhetoric, hyper-partisanship and disinformation. Those who most benefit from this spiral is a generation of politicians, often labeled ‘populists’. What they have in common is not their policies, but their ability to capture attention. They intentionally use heated language and controversial ideas to grab attention and divide the electorate in rough wars of ‘us’ versus ‘them’”. [103] Also, in this case we cannot speak of “a direct causal link, but rather of a relationship of assonance and convergence”, as highlighted in the analyses carried out by Hassan and Pinelli.[104]

Therefore, another possible consequence of polarization, observed by Svobik, is how it could damage the fundamental principles of democracy.[105] Social media, by their nature, are neither democratic nor antidemocratic; they are a tool useful to those who know how to use them. Just as in authoritarian regimes oppressed groups have used social media to promote revolt movements - as happened during the Arab Spring, although with different outcomes in various countries - in the same way, in some democratic contexts, antidemocratic forces can use access to data to influence and polarize public opinion, building loyalty through divisive dynamics and orienting it towards their own value system.[106] Svobik observes that, in a polarized context, voters tend to justify or ignore the authoritarian behaviours of the leaders of their political camp in order to maintain power, putting party affiliation before the protection of democratic values.[107] Affective polarization, as highlighted by Iyengar and Westwood, accentuates the importance of emotions and party loyalty, reducing the relevance of facts and rationality in electoral choices.[108] The daily process of polarization affects the role of centrist voters, who play a crucial role in the balance of political forces.[109] The result of this dynamic is an increasingly vulnerable democracy. When polarized citizens accept the concentration of power and the violation of democratic norms in the name of their party, the boundaries between democracy and authoritarianism become increasingly blurred.

In this context, it is relevant to note that, despite the European Union's concerns about disinformation campaigns from abroad, the vulnerability of democracy often originates within its very core. Russian disinformation related to the war in Ukraine represents a symbolic case. Unlike other destabilization initiatives, in this case the campaign did not achieve the desired results, given the unified position of the European Union. However, having to face the firm European reaction, which included sanctions and military supplies to Ukraine, the Russian narrative quickly adapted. It started to highlight the consequences of the war for the West, raising socio-economic concerns. Central issues include Europe's dependence on Russian gas and the food crisis, with the aim of spreading discontent in the European public and creating divisions between government institutions and the citizenry.[110]

These narratives are not isolated but are part of a long-term strategy aimed at destabilizing the Western socio-political order. However, foreign disinformation campaigns exploit pre-existing frictions, such as ideological divisions, economic tensions and cultural conflicts, aggravating them through anti-globalist, anti-liberal, anti-elite and anti-immigration rhetoric, themes that easily take root among populist forces, conservative groups and Euro-sceptics. Over 17,000 cases of pro-Kremlin disinformation documented by the EU vs Disinfo[111] database demonstrate how these campaigns are a pervasive phenomenon, which daily undermines the integrity of Western democratic systems. As Giusti points out, "disinformation in international relations takes root where divisions, tensions, polarizations and hidden conflicts already exist. The manipulation of information does not create these fractures, but certainly exploits and aggravates them".[112] In other words, foreign disinformation campaigns are not the source of problems, but amplify pre-existing discomforts, taking advantage of the vulnerability that a polarizing society creates.

Strategies against disinformation campaigns hold a paradox: if not managed with extreme caution, such strategies can in turn become tools of manipulation, aimed to undermine trust in democratic institutions. In the complex dynamics of the global information ecosystem, in which authoritarian regimes operate with fewer constraints than democratic systems, a disproportionate or poorly calibrated response by the European Union could effectively contain foreign interference on one hand, but on the other hand it could provide material to reinforce narratives aimed at manipulating public opinion, fostering a growing distrust towards the institutions themselves. These narratives could, for example, exploit the perception of an alleged "attack against freedom of speech" to suggest that the institutions themselves act in a repressive or anti-democratic manner. In this way, the effort to protect democratic systems could paradoxically lead against democracy itself, undermining its foundations and making it vulnerable to the very forces it intends to fight.

How can we, then, effectively fight disinformation in the post-truth era, when the search for objective truth has been replaced by the need to affirm one's own beliefs? This question does not have a single answer, but requires a systemic and coordinated approach. It is essential to involve all the implicated parts: national and supranational institutions, private platform operators, traditional media and citizens themselves. Only a collective action, oriented towards transparency and the protection of fundamental democratic principles, will be able to stop the progress of disinformation and safeguard the solidity and cohesion of democratic systems.

3 EFFECTIVENESS OF EU RESPONSES TO TACKLE DISINFORMATION - Pascaline Gaborit – with contributions from Joen Martinsen & Vishnu Rao

Prompted by the lack of regulations in other Western democracies, the European Union (EU) and its member states have been actively developing policies and initiatives to tackle disinformation. These efforts focus on safeguarding democratic processes, protecting citizens, and promoting media literacy.[113] These policies and initiatives reflect the EU's commitment to addressing the multifaceted challenge of disinformation and protecting democratic values in the digital age. They differ from other laws on disinformation, such as those adopted in Malaysia or Singapore, as they do not involve preventive or reactive censorship except in cases of "incitement to hate or crime".[114] These initiatives are strengthened by the approval of regulations on disinformation in most EU member states, which complement the EU regulatory framework. It's important to note that the EU's regulatory approach has also enabled closer cooperation among member states in cybersecurity and joint efforts to counter disinformation. We observe an ongoing struggle between EU institutions and major internet platforms to find the best approach to tackle disinformation. Although all platforms submit yearly plans, the debate between regulation and self-regulation continues, with further developments expected in the coming years.

The EU has employed a comprehensive strategy that includes developing guidelines and recommendations for its member states, as well as implementing its own regulations and initiatives to curb the spread of false or misleading information. This multifaceted approach reflects the EU's commitment to addressing disinformation on multiple fronts. In this review, we will examine the EU's various efforts and initiatives, assess some criticisms, and evaluate the effectiveness of these measures in countering the pervasive threat of disinformation across the digital landscape.

3.1 THE MAIN RESPONSES: THE ACTION PLAN AGAINST DISINFORMATION, THE DIGITAL SERVICES ACT AND THE AI ACT

In 2018, the EU Commission created a High-Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation, which outlined five key areas to tackle disinformation: (i) enhancing transparency within the digital information ecosystem, (ii) promoting media and information literacy, (iii) developing tools to empower users and journalists while encouraging positive engagement, (iv) ensuring the diversity and sustainability of the European news media landscape, and (v) conducting ongoing research on the effects of disinformation in Europe[115]. The report also highlights the importance of fact-checking, advocating for increased visibility of fact-checking organizations to reach a broader audience.[116]

In December 2018, the European Commission published an Action Plan Against Disinformation, outlining measures to strengthen the EU's capabilities to counter disinformation campaigns.[117] The plan includes initiatives to improve detection, analysis, and response to disinformation, enhance coordination among EU institutions and member states, and promote media literacy and critical thinking.

The European Democracy Action Plan, adopted in December 2020, aims to safeguard the integrity of elections and democratic processes in the EU. It encompasses measures to combat disinformation, enhance transparency in political advertising, bolster quality journalism, and foster media literacy.[118] The Digital Services Act (DSA) was also proposed by the European Commission to update and harmonize rules for digital services in the EU[119]. It includes provisions to tackle illegal content, including disinformation, by imposing obligations on online platforms to take measures to prevent the dissemination of harmful content while respecting fundamental rights. With the digital Service Act, the EU transfers the responsibility and accountability of the moderation to the online platforms.

The EU takes a preventive approach by promoting media literacy initiatives to equip citizens with skills for critical information assessment and disinformation recognition. It funds projects that boost media literacy and support quality journalism. In 2019, the EU launched a Rapid Alert System to facilitate information sharing among member states about disinformation campaigns targeting EU elections and other crucial events. This system allows for swift detection and response to disinformation threats. Additionally, the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), established in June 2020, serves as a network of fact-checkers, researchers, and academics across Europe dedicated to combating disinformation. EDMO supports fact-checking efforts, research disinformation trends, and provides analysis to policymakers and the public. Finally, the AI Act is the first-ever legal framework on AI, which addresses the risks of AI and positions Europe to play a more visible role globally.[120]

The AI Act aims to provide AI developers and deployers with clear requirements and obligations regarding specific uses of AI. At the same time, the regulation seeks to reduce administrative and financial burdens for business, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The AI Act is part of a wider package of policy measures to support the development of trustworthy AI, while possible misuses have been identified by experts in the recent years.[121] The AI Act ensures that Europeans can trust what AI has to offer. The risks of AI have indeed been identified as critical by most of the governments, but the EU is the first actor to regulate on the matter. Interestingly, the EU AI Act proposes a model based on a pyramid, identifying the level of risks.[122]

Limited risk in AI usage relates to transparency concerns. The AI Act introduces transparency obligations to foster trust by ensuring humans are informed when necessary. For example, when interacting with AI systems like chatbots, people should know they're communicating with a machine, allowing them to make informed decisions about continuing the interaction. Providers must also make AI-generated content identifiable. Moreover, AI-generated text intended to inform the public on matters of public interest must be labeled as such. This requirement extends to deep fake audio and video content. Importantly, some AI uses with unacceptable risks will be banned. These include real-time biometric identification by law enforcement in public spaces, with some clearly defined exceptions. Other prohibitions encompass untargeted scraping of facial images to create or expand facial recognition databases, emotion recognition in workplaces and educational institutions (with exceptions for safety and medical reasons), limited biometric categorization based on specific beliefs or characteristics, and a targeted ban on individual predictive policing.

The EU institutions are currently discussing this text. Notably, disinformation and malicious intentions are not the main focus of the risk assessment. Instead, it aims to create a framework for future uses and automation. The AI Act is expected to provide a safe framework for the responsible use of AI.

However, it's anticipated that loopholes will be exploited, and the Act cannot entirely prevent malicious uses.

3.2 COLLABORATION WITH THE PLATFORMS

To achieve their objective of increasing regulation of online misinformation and disinformation, efforts have been made to collaborate directly with online platforms. This collaborative approach, referred to as "co-regulation" and "self-regulation," was significantly advanced through initiatives like the 2016 EU Code of Conduct (COP) on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online. This code was developed in partnership with major companies such as Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter, and YouTube.[123]

Introduced in late 2018 as a twelve-month trial, the COP is a cornerstone of the European Commission's strategy to combat disinformation.[124] It emphasizes commitments from online platforms and advertisers to enhance transparency in political advertising, including the labelling of paid content and disclosure of sponsors. Additionally, the Code targets the business models that facilitate disinformation, urging platforms to demonetize accounts and websites that propagate false information and to limit ad revenue for producers of fake news.[125]

To improve accountability, platforms are required to equip users with tools for identifying the sources of information, collaborate with fact-checkers, and prioritize credible content, especially during crises. The Code also tackles the issue of automated accounts by mandating that platforms detect and label bots, while implementing stricter measures to shut down fake accounts. Furthermore, platforms are obligated to regularly report their efforts to combat disinformation through annual self-assessments and specific crisis reports, particularly during elections.

Collaboration with independent researchers and civil society is encouraged to enhance understanding of disinformation trends, with the Code aligning with global standards. [126] This initiative marks a significant step for the EU in promoting media pluralism and safeguarding diverse opinions.[127] By allowing platforms to self-regulate, the need for direct government intervention may be reduced, thereby fostering a safer online environment without the complications of legal repercussions. Price and Verhulst (2004) noted that platforms might be more inclined to self-regulate when faced with the threat of legal regulation or societal demands for greater accountability.[128] Thus, platforms may prefer self-regulation as a means to evade stricter legal controls or as a strategy to be perceived as responsible actors responding to user expectations.

The Digital Service Act requires large platforms to conduct risk assessments and imposes penalties for non-compliance.[129] However, the reporting of the risk assessment remains an open question.

3.3 LIMITATIONS

3.3.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE FACT CHECKING

Hoes et al. (2024) present a critical view of the recent rise in fact-checking organizations, noting that while fact-checking can correct misconceptions, it has also heightened overall scepticism toward media and

information.[130] Their findings suggest that although fact-checking plays a key role, it may contribute to distrust if overemphasized. Conversely, media literacy interventions tend to increase awareness of media biases without diminishing trust, potentially offsetting the scepticism fuelled by extensive fact-checking.[131] They argue that excessive focus on fact-checking may do more harm than good, as most people rarely encounter fake news, and overemphasis on it can lead to greater distrust.[132] This indicates a potential limitation in the EU's push for broader engagement in fact-checking efforts.

3.3.2 LIMITATIONS OF SELF-REGULATION

The EU has self-reported how the Code of Conduct has been implemented and how the platforms have complied with the regulatory framework. They found that notable progress has been made, particularly in the removal of fake accounts and in reducing the visibility of websites that spread disinformation.[133] However, the Code has also been reported to have some short-comings and faced criticism both for the implementation and for its design. Self-regulatory measures have struggled to adequately address the issues of transparency and integrity in political advertising, and enforcement has been inconsistent across the digital landscape.[134] Consequently, the effectiveness of self-regulation in ensuring openness and accountability in political advertising practices remains limited.[135] Facebook, in particular, has faced significant challenges in meeting transparency requirements for political ads, further highlighting the shortcomings of the EU's efforts to rely on platform self-regulation.[136]

During the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a significant influx of disinformation, prompting the release of a report titled Covid check, which evaluated the performance of the Code of Conduct during this time and identified several shortcomings in both its implementation and scope.[137] The report found that the framework lacked standardization in the reporting of online disinformation, resulting in considerable variability in the structure and content of reports submitted by signatories. This inconsistency hindered effective analysis and comparison, leading Culloty et al. to advocate for greater standardization in reporting practices.[138] Additionally, the report highlighted notable inconsistencies in the application of disinformation measures across different countries, raising concerns about the reliability of the reported metrics.

Furthermore, Kuczerawy points to other limitations with the Code and criticizes the implementation of it for lacking essential safeguards to adequately protect freedom of expression.[139] As the Code has a declaration on being "mindful of the fundamental right to freedom of expression and to an open Internet..." and that this won't replace existing legal framework such as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights, Kuczerawy still argues that this code will still affect the exercise of the right to freedom of expression and access to information online.[140] The article argues that safeguarding this right requires the introduction of procedural measures to enhance fairness, ensure proportionality, and incorporate elements of due process into the Code. In his argument, Kuczerawy outlines four potential safeguards that should be further developed: (1) notifying content providers, (2) allowing for counter-notifications, (3) establishing appeal mechanisms, and (4) improving the monitoring of the Code's implementation.[141]

However, early assessments of the DSA have pointed out some potential limitations. For instance, Griffin argues that developing and updating codes of conduct is complex and resource intensive. The negotiation process for the updated Code of Practice on Disinformation took over a year, partly due to the

impact of the Ukraine war, which strained the capacity of both policymakers and platform staff in their anti-disinformation efforts.[142] Additionally, EU regulators may lack the capacity to oversee multiple codes simultaneously, potentially leading to inadequacies in the enforcement and oversight of the DSA.[143]

To sum up, since 2018, there have been concerted efforts to combat the spread of disinformation across online platforms. The Digital Services Act, along with its predecessor, the 2018 Code of Practice, marked a significant shift in the approach to content moderation. These initiatives placed the focus of information oversight under the responsibility of online platforms, fundamentally altering the landscape of digital content management. Concurrently, the AI Act emerged as a regulatory framework aimed at governing the use of artificial intelligence technologies. While not explicitly tailored to address disinformation, this legislation nonetheless has potential implications for how AI might be leveraged in the creation or dissemination of false information.

The 2018 Code of Practice on Disinformation, in particular, was envisioned as a potent instrument in the fight against misinformation. However, despite its ambitious goals, it has fallen short of expectations in curbing the proliferation of disinformation across European nations. This shortcoming can be largely attributed to two key factors: its reliance on self-regulation by the platforms themselves, and its tendency towards reactive rather than proactive measures. The self-regulatory nature of the code means that platforms are essentially policing themselves, which can lead to inconsistent enforcement and potential conflicts of interest. Additionally, the reactive approach often results in addressing disinformation after it has already gained traction, rather than preventing its spread in the first place. The responses are at an early stage.

4 EXPLORING DISINFORMATION THREADS: “FRENCH FARMERS AGAINST UKRAINIAN FARMERS” AND “NO MORE WIND POWER IN FRANCE” - Georgi Gotev

The subsequent two chapters of the Working paper undertake a detailed examination of four disinformation case studies, aiming to operationalize and assess the analytical framework outlined in Chapter II. This framework applies key dimensions—context, content, information sources and following the thread, credibility, target audience and engagement metrics, and impact—to systematically analyse the selected cases. The processes of fact-checking and disinformation identification are crucial in the broader strategy to mitigate and curb the dissemination of misinformation, propaganda, and other manipulative tactics. However, revealing the multifaceted nature of disinformation operations is essential to developing the most effective countermeasures and tools.

4.1 “FRENCH FARMERS AGAINST UKRAINIAN FARMERS”

4.1.1 CONTEXT

The context is the war in Ukraine following the Russian full-time invasion, the relative lack of success of this aggression, and Moscow’s attempts to create a negative image of Ukraine in the West with the aim to discourage Western capitals from helping Ukraine to defend itself and push back the aggressor. One of the big topics the Russian propaganda has identified is the protests of farmers across the EU. These protests are traditional at this time of the year (winter and spring); however, the Kremlin propaganda conveys the message that the protests are mainly due to the imports of cheap Ukrainian cereals. It is worth to underline that Russia intensively exploits agricultural issues in its disinformation campaigns after the introduction of EU sanctions in 2014 as a reaction to the occupation of Crimea and interference into Eastern Ukraine. Russia claimed that sanctions weaken the agricultural sector and impacts the economic and social situation of farmers in the West, while for Russia sanctions promote new opportunities to restructure the sector and adapt it to the needs of its population.

4.1.2 CONTENT

The political agenda of this piece of disinformation is clear: to instigate anti-Ukrainian sentiments at a time when Western countries need to make decisions to support Ukraine further in its resistance against the Russian aggression.

The obvious signature of this piece of disinformation is Kremlin propaganda. Disinformation is weaponised in the hybrid war of Putin’s Russia against the West and the troll farms in Russia do not shy from producing falsifications, as long as they could strike a chord with Western audiences.

4.1.3 INFORMATION SOURCES AND FOLLOWING THE THREAD

The primary source of the information appearing on social media pretends to be a reputable media, Euronews. The clip posted, bearing the Euronews logo, shows farmers throwing manure at a building, with a text suggesting that this is the Embassy of Ukraine in Paris, on 11 February 2024. Factcheckers have found that such a video indeed exists, but the original by @LucAuffret shows farmers throwing manure at the regional council building on Boulevard de la Trémouille, city of Dijon, on 15 December 2023. The original video of course has no Euronews label.

In what appears to be an effort to gain credibility, the manipulated clip shows a copy of a letter of the Embassy of Ukraine in France, dated 7 February 2024, in which the ambassador V. Omelchenko expresses regret that “the French farmers, confronted with economic difficulties, had turned against the government of France and the people of Ukraine”.

Further, a French syndicalist is shown in what is presented as a reaction to the letter. Arnaud Rousseau, President of the Fédération nationale des syndicats d'exploitants agricoles, a French umbrella organisation charged with the national representation of 20,000 local agricultural unions and 22 regional federations, is presented as saying “I advise the Embassy of Ukraine to take care of Ukraine. I would not advise anything to people at whose expense I have been living for two years. Ukraine has no right to ask

or demand anything from the French”. The text appears as subtitles while the voice of Rousseau is not audible (music is played instead).

We identified the original video in which Rousseau appears in the clip which is clearly manipulated. In a 20-minute-long interview for the reputed media RMC Rousseau makes no mention of Ukraine and certainly didn’t pronounce the words attributed to him.

The interview with Rousseau too comes with the Euronews label. A spokesperson for Euronews told factcheckers: “We confirm that the video you mention is a fake, it has nothing to do with Euronews.” He added that it imitates Euronews’ journalistic style, graphics and format in a sophisticated way. The reactions on social media indicate that users took the disinformation for reality. Some blamed the French media where this information didn’t appear. @UniqueMongolia who posted the clip responded, “I think they will silence it”. Some of the reactions are clearly hate speech against Ukraine, such as @StingerDeyan who posted “Down with Ukrainia”.

Apparently from all X users who commented only @AlexAlicus identified the post and the clip as Russian propaganda. Up to date (26 April 2024) the X platform hasn’t removed the fake video. All in all, this malicious disinformation is an example of imposter content – an image or video that mimics an organisation such as a news outlet to push forward a narrative. This type of imposter content is also known as Doppelganger.

4.1.4 CREDIBILITY

Credibility is built by falsifying a video to make it represent something that never happened (French farmers didn’t throw manure at the Ukrainian embassy in Paris), by labelling it to suggest it originated from a reputable media such as Euronews (it didn’t), and by putting words in the mouth of a credible stakeholder, such as a French syndicalist, which he didn’t pronounce. All in all, this represents a considerable amount of work which requires technical skills. It is not, certainly, the work of an amateur.

4.1.5 TARGET AUDIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT METRICS

The target audience appears to be Westerners who are vulnerable to the message that the war in Ukraine costs too much to them as taxpayers and that Ukraine should not join the EU, because it would flood the internal market with its cheap products.

4.1.6 IMPACT

The malicious impact appears to be successful, judging by the comments of users of the X platform, which didn’t notice the falsifications. Such posts aim at influencing the public opinion and the political parties who are opposed to helping Ukraine and say that the EU and its member states have plenty of internal problems which should be the priority, so the scarce resources should not be spent elsewhere. There are already member states which officially take this view (Hungary, Slovakia) and the presumed aim of the disinformation is to add more to the list.

Since the EU and its member states have become more vigilant as to fake news making their way into official media, the authors of the disinformation create video clips or articles which pretend to originate from reputed media, and disseminate them via social media, which are less regarding.

4.2 “NO MORE WIND POWER IN FRANCE”

4.2.1 CONTEXT

The context is the hostility of influential circles in Bulgaria against the EU climate policies, the EU Green Deal, against renewable energy in general and wind power in particular. The same circles control media outlets which also circulate pro-Russia and anti-Ukraine messages.

Energy in Bulgaria is a divisive topic with strong lobbies, including the coal and mining lobby, which finds synergies with political parties with an openly pro-Russian agenda such as Vazrazhdane and the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), who are also increasingly critical of the EU and its climate change policies. Russia's interest is to preserve a status quo in which Bulgaria was 100% dependent on Russian gas as well as 100% dependent of Russia nuclear fuel supplies for its Kozlodui nuclear power central. This status quo however has been shattered since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and today Bulgaria no longer imports gas from Gazprom and will receive supplies for its nuclear plant from Westinghouse. Russia has over the years cultivated its own lobbies in the Bulgarian society very vocal on official media.

4.2.2 CONTENT

The core message of the disinformation is that France, a well-developed Western country, has at last admitted that wind turbines are too noisy, and has taken the decision to put an end to this industry. This of course is not true; a French authority has only decided to change the protocols for measuring the noise of wind turbines. The motives for the dissemination of the fake news are clear: Bulgaria too should stop developing wind energy. The ideological bias is not only in favour of traditional sources of energy, such as coal, but also against the EU Green Deal, more in general against EU policies, and even more broadly – to suit the Kremlin agenda.

4.2.3 INFORMATION SOURCES AND FOLLOWING THE THREAD

Saprotivata.bg website (saprotiva means resistance) – presents itself as “representing 60% of the Bulgarians”, but doesn't provide information about its ownership, editor, editorial team or address. It only indicates an email address and a mobile phone number for contact. The article “No more wind power in France” is signed “Rada Gospozhina”, a pen name. However, this has not prevented the spread of the publication across a large number of Facebook groups with a combined audience of over half a million users. The post was also shared on the X social network, with tweets also talking about banning wind turbines in France.

Many of the websites in Bulgaria are opaque as to their ownership, editorial team and business model. Most of the readers don't question the credibility of the source if it is posted on Facebook. Also, most of the readers don't read the article, and many react only after having read its title.

For a professional journalist, the publication has many signs that it lacks credibility. The website is not known, the author obviously wants to remain anonymous, the article is poorly written and the author either hasn't understood the original French publication, or (more probably) has on purpose changed its meaning. In fact, the French authorities have decided to change the protocols for measuring the noise of wind turbines. In the interpretation by Saprotiva and 'Rada Gospozhina', the decision is to put an end to wind energy in France.

It is a recurrent trick for authors of fake news in Bulgaria to present an article from a Western media by completely misinterpreting it, and by fabricating a title that sparks emotions on social media. The reliable website Factcheck.bg published a detailed article about this fake news in particular and also about the networks for spreading misinformation about green energy in Bulgaria. This check showed that the "Man-Nature-Life" association is connected with individuals and organisations around the "Historical Park" (a nationalist group with pro-Russian sympathies and a Facebook group with 153,000 followers) and around the "Free and Peaceful Bulgaria" Facebook group with its 30,000 followers. They are all part of a network for the coordinated distribution of anti-European content, anti-green energy disinformation and the promotion of anti-aid messages against Ukraine.

The path of publications claiming that France has banned wind turbines follows exactly this distribution model. It was shared, for example, by the profile of Sarnela Vodenicharova, who is part of the initiative committee of the "Free and Peaceful Bulgaria" initiative, by the "Free and Peaceful Bulgaria" Facebook group itself, by the "Narodna Media" group associated with it, and by the "Bulgaria" Facebook page" with its almost 180,000 followers, which is among the administrators of "Free and Peaceful Bulgaria". These posts also receive additional shares from other individual profiles, through which they reach several more groups.

There are also shares of the post in groups related to "Historical Park", including "Beautiful Vetrino" and "Beautiful Silistra". A link to the publication was also shared on the X profile of the founder of "Historical Park" Ivelin Mihailov.

4.2.4 CREDIBILITY

The author has quoted French institutions, which at first sight sounds credible, but the real meaning of the original sources has been completely falsified. Fact-checkers in Bulgaria have identified many examples of this type of manipulation – false translation of a text from a reputed Western website.

4.2.5 TARGET AUDIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT METRICS

The target of this fake news is clearly the nationalist and Eurosceptic audience in Bulgaria which translates into several political forces, of which some are represented in the Bulgarian and in the European Parliament. Foreign interference cannot be directly identified, but the fake news plays in the hands of the Kremlin both for feeding anti-EU sentiments and for giving priority to fossil fuels.

The fake news “No more wind power in France” was spread across a large number of Facebook groups with a combined audience of over half a million users. The post was also shared on the X social network, with tweets also talking about banning wind turbines in France.

It can be safely assumed that the vast majority of the readers of the articles of the obscure website Saprotivata come from social media, mostly Facebook which is the number one social media in Bulgaria. Despite media publications about this particular fake news, Facebook has not removed the article from the platform.

4.2.6 IMPACT

The malicious impact appears to be overall successful, judging by comments by Facebook users, despite that some have realised the manipulation. With Bulgaria in a political crisis with successive elections unable to elect a viable government, such publications over time increase the weight of anti-EU and anti-green policies forces.

5 EXPLORING DISINFORMATION THREADS: “UKRAINE IS A COLONY OF THE WEST” AND “UKRAINIAN REFUGEES” - Alona Hryshko

5.1 “UKRAINE IS A COLONY OF THE WEST”

5.1.1 CONTEXT

Before February 22, 2022, Russian narratives regarding Ukraine's relationship with the West were shaped by historical tensions between Russia and Western powers over institutional enlargement policies and individual countries' foreign and security decisions. Russia's negative attitudes were particularly evident during the Euromaidan in 2014, following Ukraine's decisive move to join the EU and NATO. At that time, Russia's criticism focused on the US and the EU, accusing the West of colonizing Ukraine. This context also included Russia's perception of its sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space and its opposition to the eastward expansion of the EU and NATO. Russia has attempted to hinder the consolidation of Ukrainian society and its rapprochement with the EU and NATO.

5.1.2 CONTENT

1) “Pawn of the West”

The idea that Ukraine is only a tool or pawn used by Western powers, especially the US and its allies, is a recurrent motif. According to this narrative, Ukraine's allegiance to the West—including its goals of joining the EU and NATO—was forced or manipulated by outside forces rather than being a sovereign choice.

2) The West is to blame for stirring up Russia

The material usually implies that Western initiatives, including NATO expansion and military assistance to Ukraine, are calculated provocations directed towards Russia. This narrative presents Russia's engagement

in Ukraine as a defensive reaction to perceived threats that were manufactured by the West, so absolving it of accountability for its actions.

3) Geopolitical interests

It is implied that certain Western nations, especially the US, have geopolitical interests in the “crisis” in Ukraine. This contains allusions to military-industrial complexes, energy concerns, and more general tactics meant to limit or weaken Russia's power in the area.

4) Discrediting Western leadership

Another part of the Narrative involves casting Western institutions and leaders in a negative light by depicting them as careless or malicious individuals looking to prolong hostilities for personal benefit. Allegations of deception, hypocrisy, and disdain for the welfare of the Ukrainian people are included in this.

5.1.3 INFORMATION SOURCES AND FOLLOWING THE THREAD

Before February 22, Russian narratives often relied on state-controlled media outlets such as RT (formerly Russia Today) and Sputnik, which have been criticized for their pro-Kremlin bias. After February 22, Russian and pro-Kremlins sources worldwide continued to disseminate narratives portraying Ukraine as a pawn of the West, while also utilizing social media platforms (e.g., Telegram, VKontakte, Facebook-Meta, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter) and online forums to amplify these messages and target specific audiences, both domestically and internationally. These messengers have become a medium for the exchange of information between their users and have also provided a platform for the media and journalists to continue their work without censorship. Offering both encrypted and unencrypted chat features, they have continued to grow in popularity since the start of Russia's war against Ukraine, and have become a source of propaganda, disinformation, the spread of deepfakes, and more.

The amplification of information was taking place through following threads.

TEXT (PART OF RUSSIAN MFA LAVROV'S SPEECH)

RUSSIAN	ENGLISH
«КАК ПРИ ГИТЛЕРЕ, ПРОТИВ РОССИИ ОБЪЕДИНИЛИСЬ 54 СТРАНЫ» – ЛАВРОВ	“LIKE UNDER HITLER, 54 COUNTRIES UNITED AGAINST RUSSIA” - LAVROV
СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ ЗАПАДНЫЕ ПОЛИТИКИ ИДУТ ПО СТОПАМ ГИТЛЕРА И НАПОЛЕОНА, И УЖЕ ОБЪЕДИНИЛИ 54 ГОСУДАРСТВА ДЛЯ ВОЙНЫ ПРОТИВ РОССИИ. ОБ ЭТОМ ЗАЯВИЛ МИНИСТР ИНОСТРАННЫХ ДЕЛ УКРАИНЫ СЕРГЕЙ ЛАВРОВ.	MODERN WESTERN POLITICIANS ARE FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HITLER AND NAPOLEON, AND HAVE ALREADY UNITED 54 STATES FOR THE WAR AGAINST RUSSIA. THIS WAS STATED BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF UKRAINE SERGEI LAVROV.
«УКРАИНСКИЙ КРИЗИС, ПО БОЛЬШОМУ СЧЁТУ, ЯВЛЯЕТСЯ ИСПЫТАНИЕМ ДЛЯ ФОРМИРУЮЩЕГОСЯ МИРОПОРЯДКА. ИСПЫТАНИЕМ ДЛЯ МИРОВОГО БОЛЬШИНСТВА, КОТОРОЕ ВСЁ БОЛЬШЕ ОСОЗНАЁТ БЕСПЕРСПЕКТИВНОСТЬ ПОЛАГАТЬСЯ ИСКЛЮЧИТЕЛЬНО НА ТЕ МЕХАНИЗМЫ	“THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS, BY AND LARGE, IS A TEST FOR THE EMERGING WORLD ORDER. A TEST FOR THE WORLD MAJORITY, WHICH IS INCREASINGLY REALIZING THE FUTILITY OF RELYING EXCLUSIVELY ON THOSE MECHANISMS OF INTERNATIONAL LIFE THAT WERE CREATED BY THE COLLECTIVE WEST. AND

RUSSIAN	ENGLISH
МЕЖДУНАРОДНОЙ ЖИЗНИ, КОТОРЫЕ БЫЛИ СОЗДАНЫ КОЛЛЕКТИВНЫМ ЗАПАДОМ. И КОТОРЫЕ ЭТИМ ЖЕ КОЛЛЕКТИВНЫМ ЗАПАДОМ ЭКСПЛУАТИРУЮТСЯ НЕЩАДНО. С ЕДИНСТВЕННОЙ ЦЕЛЬЮ – ПРОДОЛЖАТЬ НЕОКОЛОНИАЛЬНОЕ ОГРАБЛЕНИЕ, И ЖИТЬ ЗА ЧУЖОЙ СЧЁТ», – СКАЗАЛ ЛАВРОВ.	WHICH ARE MERCILESSLY EXPLOITED BY THE SAME COLLECTIVE WEST. FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF CONTINUING THE NEO-COLONIAL ROBBERY AND LIVING AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHERS,” LAVROV SAID.
ОН ПОДЧЕРКНУЛ, ЧТО ВАШИНГТОН ПЫТАЕТСЯ ОПЯТЬ НАТРАВИТЬ ОБЪЕДИНЁННУЮ ЕВРОПУ ДЛЯ НАПАДЕНИЯ НА РОССИЮ.	HE EMPHASIZED THAT WASHINGTON IS AGAIN TRYING TO INCITE A UNITED EUROPE TO ATTACK RUSSIA.
«США И ДРУГИЕ ЗАПАДНЫЕ СТРАНЫ ОТКРОВЕННО РАССКАЗЫВАЮТ И ОПИСЫВАЮТ ТО, ЧТО ВИДЯТ В УКРАИНЕ. ОНИ ЕЁ РАССМАТРИВАЮТ КАК ОДИН ИЗ ИНСТРУМЕНТОВ СДЕРЖИВАНИЯ РОССИИ, В КАЧЕСТВЕ ОБОРОНИТЕЛЬНОГО ВАЛА ПЕРЕД РОССИЕЙ. МЕНТАЛИТЕТ ТАКОЙ: ВСЁ, ЧТО СВЯЗАНО С УКРАИНОЙ, НЕОБХОДИМО ИСПОЛЬЗОВАТЬ ДЛЯ НАНЕСЕНИЯ СТРАТЕГИЧЕСКОГО ПОРАЖЕНИЯ РОССИИ. ТАК БЫЛО И ВО ВРЕМЯ НАПОЛЕОНОВСКИХ ВОЙН, И ВО ВРЕМЯ ВТОРОЙ МИРОВОЙ ВОЙНЫ, КОГДА ГИТЛЕР ПРАКТИЧЕСКИ ВСЕ ЕВРОПЕЙСКИЕ СТРАНЫ ПОДЧИНИЛ СВОЕЙ ЦЕЛИ НАПАДЕНИЯ НА СОВЕТСКИЙ СОЮЗ. И ВЫ ЗНАЕТЕ, ЧЕМ ЭТО КОНЧИЛОСЬ. А СЕГОДНЯ МЕНТАЛИТЕТ ОСТАЛСЯ ТЕМ ЖЕ САМЫМ. США ОБЪЕДИНИЛИ ВСЕГО 54 СТРАНЫ В ЛАГЕРЬ, КОТОРЫЙ НАКАЧИВАЕТ УКРАИНЫ ОРУЖИЕМ, ПОСТАВЛЯЕТ ВОЕННЫХ СПЕЦИАЛИСТОВ, ЭКСПЕРТОВ. ПОМОГАЮТ НАВОДИТЬ НА ЦЕЛИ. И ВСЁ ЭТО ДЕЛАЕТСЯ ТОЛЬКО ДЛЯ ТОГО, ЧТОБЫ РОССИЯ НЕ ПОБЕДИЛА», – ДОБАВИЛ МИНИСТР.	“THE USA AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES OPENLY TALK AND DESCRIBE WHAT THEY SEE IN UKRAINE. THEY VIEW IT AS ONE OF THE TOOLS TO CONTAIN RUSSIA, AS A DEFENSIVE RAMPART IN FRONT OF RUSSIA. THE MENTALITY IS THIS: EVERYTHING CONNECTED WITH UKRAINE MUST BE USED TO INFLICT A STRATEGIC DEFEAT ON RUSSIA. THIS WAS THE CASE DURING THE NAPOLEONIC WARS AND DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR, WHEN HITLER SUBORDINATED ALMOST ALL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES TO HIS GOAL OF ATTACKING THE SOVIET UNION. AND YOU KNOW HOW IT ENDED. BUT TODAY THE MENTALITY REMAINS THE SAME. THE UNITED STATES HAS UNITED ONLY 54 COUNTRIES INTO A CAMP THAT PUMPS WEAPONS INTO UKRAINE AND SUPPLIES MILITARY SPECIALISTS AND EXPERTS. HELP GUIDE UKRAINE. AND ALL THIS IS BEING DONE ONLY TO ENSURE THAT RUSSIA DOES NOT WIN,” THE MINISTER ADDED.

NO.	SOURCES		
	ONLINE MEDIA		
	DATE	ORIGINAL (IN RUSSIAN)	IN ENGLISH
1.1	30/01 /2024	<u>НА ЗАПАДЕ ПОНИМАЮТ, ЧТО НАЧАЛСЯ СРЫВ "ПРОЕКТА УКРАИНА"</u>	IN THE WEST, THEY UNDERSTAND THAT THE “UKRAINE PROJECT” HAS BEGUN TO FAIL

1.2		<u>НА ЗАПАДЕ ПОНИМАЮТ, ЧТО СРЫВ "ПРОЕКТА УКРАИНА" НАЧАЛСЯ</u>	IN THE WEST, THEY UNDERSTAND THAT THE "UKRAINE PROJECT" HAS BEGUN TO FAIL
1.3		ЗАПАД УЖЕ ПОНЯЛ, ЧТО НАЧАЛСЯ СРЫВ «ПРОЕКТА УКРАИНА	IN THE WEST THEY UNDERSTAND THAT THE DISRUPTION OF THE "UKRAINE PROJECT" HAS BEGUN
1.4		<u>ЛАВРОВ: НА ЗАПАДЕ ОСОЗНАЛИ, ЧТО "СРЫВ" "УКРАИНСКОГО</u>	LAVROV: THE WEST REALIZED THAT THE "DISRUPTION" OF THE "UKRAINIAN PROJECT"
1.5		<u>ЗАПАД ОСОЗНАЕТ "СРЫВ" ПРОЕКТА "УКРАИНА", НО БОИТСЯ ...</u> <u>ЗАПАД ОСОЗНАЛ, ЧТО "СРЫВ" УКРАИНСКОГО ПРОЕКТА УЖЕ ...</u>	THE WEST IS AWARE OF THE "DISRUPTION" OF THE UKRAINE PROJECT, BUT IS AFRAID...
1.6		<u>ЛАВРОВ: НА ЗАПАДЕ ПОНИМАЮТ, ЧТО НАЧАЛСЯ СРЫВ ИХ</u> <u>ЛАВРОВ: ЗАПАД ПОНИМАЕТ, ЧТО НАЧАЛСЯ СРЫВ «ПРОЕКТА ...</u> <u>ЛАВРОВ: НА ЗАПАДЕ ПОНИМАЮТ, ЧТО СРЫВ «ПРОЕКТА УКРАИНА</u>	LAVROV: THE WEST UNDERSTANDS THAT THEIR DISRUPTION HAS BEGUN
1.7		<u>КОНЕЦ "ПРОЕКТА УКРАИНА", ЛЬВОВСКИЕ БОРЦЫ С "ИДОЛАМИ ...</u>	THE END OF THE "UKRAINE PROJECT", LVIV FIGHTERS AGAINST "IDOLS...
1.8		<u>ЗАПАД ОСОЗНАЛ, ЧТО СРЫВ УКРАИНСКОГО ПРОЕКТА НАЧАЛСЯ ...</u> <u>ЗАПАД ПОНИМАЕТ, ЧТО «СРЫВ» УКРАИНСКОГО ПРОЕКТА НАЧАЛСЯ</u>	THE WEST HAS REALIZED THAT THE "DISRUPTION" OF THE UKRAINIAN PROJECT HAS ALREADY... THE WEST UNDERSTANDS THAT THE "DISRUPTION" OF THE UKRAINIAN PROJECT HAS BEGUN
2	OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF RUSSIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS		
	2.1	<u>КРУГЛОГО СТОЛА» ПО ТЕМАТИКЕ УРЕГУЛИРОВАНИЯ СИТУАЦИИ</u>	ROUND TABLE" ON THE TOPIC OF RESOLVING THE SITUATION
3	TELEGRAM		
		ORIGINAL (IN RUSSIAN)	IN ENGLISH
	3.1	<u>HTTPS://T.ME/REGNUM NA/52827</u> <u>НА ЗАПАДЕ ПОНИМАЮТ, ЧТО СРЫВ «ПРОЕКТА УКРАИНА» НАЧАЛСЯ, НО ОСТАНОВИТЬСЯ В СВОЕЙ ПОДДЕРЖКЕ УЖЕ НЕ МОГУТ</u> ЗАПАД ЗА НЕПОЛНЫЕ ДВА ГОДА УЖЕ ВЫДЕЛИЛ УКРАИНЕ БОЛЕЕ 200 МИЛЛИАРДОВ ДОЛЛАРОВ. ОСТЕРВЕНЕНИЕ АНГЛОСАКСОВ В ОТСТАИВАНИИ «ФОРМУЛЫ ВЛАДИМИРА	THE WEST UNDERSTANDS THAT THE DISRUPTION OF THE "UKRAINE PROJECT" HAS BEGUN, BUT THEY CAN'T STOP SUPPORTING IT THE WEST HAS ALREADY ALLOCATED MORE THAN \$200 BILLION TO UKRAINE IN LESS THAN TWO YEARS. THE FRENZY OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS IN DEFENDING THE "FORMULA OF VLADIMIR

		ЗЕЛЕНСКОГО» НЕ ОСТАВЛЯЕТ СОМНЕНИЙ, ЧТО ЗАПАД САМ ЕЕ НАПИСАЛ. 170 REACTIONS IN TOTAL 10,9K VIEWS 10 COMMENTS	ZELENSKY” LEAVES NO DOUBT THAT THE WEST ITSELF WROTE IT. 170 REACTIONS IN TOTAL 10,9K VIEWS 10 COMMENTS
	3.2	HTTPS://TLGRM.RU/CHANNELS/@RUBEZHIZARUBEZH/6018	
	3.3	HTTPS://T.ME/TASS LIVE/5039 21 REACTIONS IN TOTAL 1,7K VIEWS	
	3.4	HTTPS://WEB.TELEGRAM.ORG/K/#@TASS AGENCY 31,4K VIEWS	
4	VKONTAKTE (RUSSIAN SOCIAL NETWORK)		
	4.1	HTTPS://VK.COM/WALL-24136539_8670334 21K VIEWS 114 REACTIONS 7 SHARES	
	4.2	HTTPS://VK.COM/KRASNODARNEWSNET 19 VIEWS	
5	X (EX-TWI)		
	5.1	HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/HD7PR5YZBN59013/STATUS/175230832227626044 264 VIEWS 16 LIKES 5 SHARES	
	5.2	HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/ANEWS/STATUS/1752332138773438635 95 VIEWS	
6	INTERNATIONAL MEDIA		
	6.1	RUSSIA SAYS WEST UNDERSTANDS 'UKRAINE PROJECT' HAS BEGUN	
	6.2	ANEWS	
	6.3	WEST STARTS TO REALIZE FAILURE OF 'UKRAINE PROJECT,' LAVROV SAYS	
	6.4	WEST STARTS TO UNDERSTAND THAT UKRAINE PROJECT 'FAILING' ***	
	***	PRO-RUSSIAN AFFILIATED SPUTNIK	

5.1.4 CREDIBILITY

Assessing the credibility of the sources disseminating these narratives is essential. State-controlled media outlets like RT and Sputnik, known for their pro-Kremlin bias, may lack objectivity and present a skewed perspective of events. This bias raise doubts about the credibility of the information they provide. However, users in social media spread news as well commenting the statement.

5.1.5 TARGET AUDIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT METRICS

5.1.5.1 "PAWN OF THE WEST" NARRATIVE

The target audience for this message includes individuals within Russia and other pro-Russian communities who are predisposed to distrust Western powers. It aims to reinforce the idea that Ukraine's alignment with the West is not a genuine choice but a result of manipulation, appealing to nationalist sentiments and historical narratives of Western interference.

5.1.5.2 BLAMING THE WEST FOR STIRRING UP RUSSIA

This narrative resonates with audiences who perceive Western actions, such as NATO expansion or military support to Ukraine, as aggressive moves against Russia. It targets individuals sympathetic to Russian perspectives on geopolitics and may seek to sow doubt about Western intentions, particularly among those who are already sceptical of Western involvement in Eastern Europe.

5.1.5.3 GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS

The implication of Western nations pursuing agendas to weaken Russia's power appeals to audiences concerned about preserving Russian influence in the region. This narrative may resonate with nationalists, anti-Western groups, and individuals who prioritize Russia's geopolitical interests over those of the West.

5.1.5.4 DISCREDITING WESTERN LEADERSHIP

This message is designed to undermine confidence in Western institutions and leaders, appealing to individuals disillusioned with Western policies or sceptical of Western intentions. It may target audiences critical of Western interventionism or those who perceive Western leaders as hypocritical or self-serving. While the exploration of engagement metrics primarily focuses on social media platforms, it's essential to acknowledge that disinformation campaigns can extend beyond these platforms to various mediums, including messaging apps like Telegram, news websites, and social networks like VKontakte. Each platform offers unique engagement metrics that provide insight into the reach and impact of the Rudisinfo content. For instance:

- Telegram: The post garnered significant attention with 170 reactions and 10.9K views, indicating a relatively high level of engagement.
- TASS Telegram Channel: While the post received fewer reactions (21) compared to Telegram, it achieved a considerable number of views (1.7K), suggesting a significant reach.
- TASS Website: With 31.4K views on the TASS website, the post reached a substantial audience.
- VKontakte: The post on VKontakte generated 21K views, 114 reactions, and 7 shares, indicating moderate engagement. Additionally, the post on another VKontakte page received 19 views, suggesting lower reach or interest compared to the previous post.

5.1.6 IMPACT

Disinformation campaigns aimed at portraying Ukraine as a pawn of the West or blaming the West for stirring up Russia can shape public perception and influence policy-making. By framing Western actions as “aggressive or manipulative”, these narratives may fuel anti-Western sentiment and hinder diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts. Geopolitical narratives that highlight Western agendas to weaken Russia's power can exacerbate tensions and may contribute to a cycle of escalation from Russia's side like “Russia is forced to defence itself”.

Additional cases at the beginning of Russian full-scale invasion are presented in the Annex 1.

5.2 “UKRAINIAN REFUGEES”

5.2.1 CONTEXT

Two years after Russia's invasion, the repercussions on Ukraine's population have been profound, with approximately one-fifth of the nation's 37 million citizens seeking refuge abroad. This mass exodus reflects the severe impact of the conflict on civilians, compelling many to flee their homes in search of safety and stability.

Of the 37 million citizens who call Ukraine home, an estimated 7.4 million individuals have sought refuge elsewhere, either internally displaced within Ukraine or seeking asylum abroad. Among these displaced individuals, a staggering 4 million have been granted refugee-like protection in various European Union (EU) countries. This statistic underscores the scale of the humanitarian crisis sparked by the invasion and the urgent need for international assistance and support.

The decision of over half of Ukraine's displaced population to seek refuge in EU countries reflects both the proximity of these nations to Ukraine and the perceived opportunities for safety and assistance within the EU.

The narratives exploit social tensions and fears surrounding immigration and refugees in Europe. They tap into existing prejudices and stereotypes to paint Ukrainian refugees in a negative light. References to historical events, such as Nazism and war, are used to evoke emotional responses and frame Ukrainian refugees as potentially dangerous or undesirable.

The ongoing Russian war against Ukraine influences how Ukrainian refugees are perceived. The narratives may serve political agendas by attempting to undermine support for Ukraine and manipulate public opinion in favour of Russia.

The narratives overlook the humanitarian aspect of the refugee crisis, failing to acknowledge the dire circumstances that force individuals from Ukraine to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere. Claims about refugees being a burden on the economy or taking advantage of social services overlook the potential contributions that refugees can make to their host countries and ignore the economic benefits of diversity and inclusion.

Overall, the context in which these fake claims are presented is characterized by a combination of social, cultural, historical, geopolitical, and economic factors.

5.2.2 CONTENT

The main narratives were as follow:

- 1) “Ukrainian refugees are dangerous for Europe”.

This claim lacks sufficient evidence and context. While refugees may face challenges and discrimination in some instances, it is misleading to generalize that Ukrainian refugees are universally dangerous for Europe.

- 2) “Europe is tired of refugees from Ukraine”

This claim oversimplifies complex societal attitudes towards refugees and lacks empirical evidence to support it. It fails to consider the diverse responses and support mechanisms provided by different European countries and communities.

- 3) “Governments care more about Ukrainian refugees than their own citizens”

This claim lacks evidence and ignores the reality of government policies and priorities. It oversimplifies complex decision-making processes and fails to acknowledge the efforts made by governments to address the needs of both refugees and citizens.

- 4) “Other migrants suffer because of refugees from Ukraine”

It fails to recognize the broader systemic factors that contribute to challenges faced by migrants and refugees alike, such as immigration policies, economic disparities, and social integration issues.

- 5) “Real refugees from the war zone went to Russia”

This claim is misleading and lacks evidence. It ignores the fact that many Ukrainian refugees have sought asylum in various countries, including those in Europe, due to the ongoing Russian war and humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. At the same time, many Ukrainians were forcibly deported to Russia near the frontline or on the temporarily occupied territories.

- 6) “Refugees are a burden on the economy”

This claim lacks empirical evidence and fails to consider the potential economic contributions of refugees, such as labour participation and entrepreneurship. It overlooks studies that have shown the positive economic impact of refugee resettlement programs.

- 7) “Refugees are used to blackmail European countries”

This claim lacks evidence and relies on conspiracy theories. It fails to provide concrete examples or data to support the assertion that refugees are being used as a tool for blackmail.

- 8) “Refugees from Ukraine are actually economic migrants”

This claim ignores the reasons why individuals flee their countries, such as persecution, violence, and Russian war against Ukraine. It oversimplifies the complex motives behind migration and fails to acknowledge the humanitarian aspect of the refugee crisis.

- 9) “Refugees don’t want to look for a job and work”

It overlooks the challenges faced by refugees in accessing employment opportunities and ignores studies that have shown their desire to contribute to the labour market.

5.2.3 INFORMATION SOURCES AND FOLLOWING THE THREAD

Russian narratives, often criticized for their pro-Kremlin bias, have increasingly relied on state-controlled media outlets such as RT and Sputnik, especially after February 22. These sources, along with a network of pro-Kremlin platforms, have actively spread disinformation about Ukrainian refugees, utilizing social

media platforms like Telegram, VKontakte, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube and Twitter. Russian narratives have also infiltrated support groups for Ukrainian refugees abroad, including Facebook and Telegram communities like "SOS! Dopomoga ukrainsiam! Dopomozhemo razom!", "Ukrainian Canadians," and Telegram channels such as "Infodopomoga. EU" and "Ukrainians in Germany" etc. They disseminated their propaganda narratives in the comments of these groups' posts, posing as residents of Europe: "ukrainians are lazy and want to live off social benefits without working"; "ukrainians are taking jobs from our (the locals) people"; "why go if you don't know the language?"; "wealthy people left Ukraine in expensive cars, and their behaviour shocks the reserved Europeans". Notably, in European countries where a significant number of Ukrainian asylum seekers reside, there has been a particularly concentrated effort to promote these narratives within refugee support groups. The primary goal of this disinformation campaign is to cultivate negative attitudes towards Ukrainians among EU citizens, reduce Western support for Ukraine, and influence public and political sentiment in Europe.

Such narratives are spread via anonymous Telegram groups that play rhetoric supportive of the Kremlin. The post cites an article from CNews, a French television network, and claims that illegal immigrants from Africa are being housed in France by ejecting Ukrainian refugees onto the streets. The French TV channel's story, according to analysts from the Center for Countering Disinformation, was not about Ukrainians, but rather about an African migrant refuge housed in a school. The school building used to be the actual home of Ukrainian refugees, but by the time African migrants moved in, the Ukrainian refugees had already departed the shelter.

Therefore, Russian propagandists are attempting to fabricate the idea that the allies of Ukraine are tired of the war and no longer want to help Ukrainians.

NO.	SOURCES		
	ONLINE MEDIA		
	DATE	ORIGINAL (IN RUSSIAN)	IN ENGLISH
1.1	26/09/2023	<u>ВО ФРАНЦИИ УКРАИНСКИХ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ ВЫГОНЯЮТ НА УЛИЦУ РАДИ НЕЛЕГАЛОВ ИЗ АФРИКИ</u> 4K VIEWS 125 LIKES 10 COMMENTS	IN FRANCE, UKRAINIAN REFUGEES ARE DRIVEN OUT ONTO THE STREETS FOR THE SAKE OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS FROM AFRICA 4K VIEWS 125 LIKES 10 COMMENTS
2	TELEGRAM		
		ORIGINAL (IN RUSSIAN)	IN ENGLISH
2.1		<u>ВО ФРАНЦИИ УКРАИНСКИХ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ ВЫГОНЯЮТ НА УЛИЦУ РАДИ НЕЛЕГАЛОВ ИЗ АФРИКИ</u> ФРАНЦУЗСКИЕ ВЛАСТИ НАЧАЛИ ВЫСЕЛЯТЬ ИЗ УБЕЖИЩ УКРАИНСКИХ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ В ПОЛЬЗУ НЕЛЕГАЛЬНЫХ МИГРАНТОВ ИЗ АФРИКИ. К ПРИМЕРУ, БЕЖЕНЦЕВ С УКРАИНЫ ВЫСЕЛИЛИ ИЗ ЗДАНИЯ ЗАКРЫТОЙ НАЧАЛЬНОЙ ШКОЛЫ 7-ГО ОКРУГА ПАРИЖА И ПОСЕЛИЛИ 25 НЕЛЕГАЛОВ ИЗ ГВИНЕИ. НА	IN FRANCE, UKRAINIAN REFUGEES ARE DRIVEN OUT ONTO THE STREETS FOR THE SAKE OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS FROM AFRICA FRENCH AUTHORITIES BEGAN TO EVICT UKRAINIAN REFUGEES FROM THEIR SHELTERS IN FAVOR OF ILLEGAL MIGRANTS FROM AFRICA. FOR EXAMPLE, REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE WERE EVICTED FROM THE BUILDING OF A CLOSED PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE 7TH ARRONDISSEMENT OF PARIS AND 25 ILLEGAL

		НИХ ЖЕ ПЕРЕРАСПРЕДЕЛИЛИ ГУМАНИТАРНЫЙ ПАЕК ИЗ ОДЕЖДЫ И ЕДЫ. ФРАНЦУЗСКОЕ ИМПОРТОЗАМЕЩЕНИЕ. 33,9 VIEWS 896 REACTIONS 19 COMMENTS	IMMIGRANTS FROM GUINEA WERE ACCOMMODATED. HUMANITARIAN RATIONS OF CLOTHING AND FOOD WERE REDISTRIBUTED TO THEM. FRENCH IMPORT SUBSTITUTION. 33,9 VIEWS 896 REACTIONS 19 COMMENTS
ВКОНТАКТЕ (RUSSIAN SOCIAL NETWORK)			
3	3.1	<u>ВО ФРАНЦИИ УКРАИНСКИХ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ ВЫГОНЯЮТ НА УЛИЦУ РАДИ НЕЛЕГАЛОВ ИЗ АФРИКИ</u>	

TEXT IN NEWS (RUSSIAN DISINFO)

RUSSIAN	ENGLISH
<p>СКАНДАЛЬНЫЙ ЗАКОН О ТОТАЛЬНОЙ МОБИЛИЗАЦИИ НА УКРАИНЕ ПОСЛЕ ЖАРКИХ МЕДИЙНЫХ БОЕВ И ПОПЫТОК ПЕРЕЛОЖИТЬ ОТВЕТСТВЕННОСТЬ ЗА ЕГО ПРИНЯТИЕ ДРУГ НА ДРУГА ВСЕ-ТАКИ ПРОТАЩИЛИ ЧЕРЕЗ ВЕРХОВНУЮ РАДУ. ПОКА ЧТО В ПЕРВОМ ЧТЕНИИ, ХОТЯ МАЛО КТО СОМНЕВАЕТСЯ В ТОМ, ЧТО С ОПРЕДЕЛЕННЫМИ ПРАВКАМИ ВСКОРЕ УТВЕРДЯТ ОКОНЧАТЕЛЬНО.</p> <p>ЭТО — ДОКУМЕНТ, СВИДЕТЕЛЬСТВУЮЩИЙ ОБ ОТЧАЯНИИ УКРАИНСКОГО РЕЖИМА, ПЫТАЮЩЕГОСЯ НАЙТИ НУЖНОЕ КОЛИЧЕСТВО ПУШЕЧНОГО МЯСА, КОТОРОЕ ОН СОБИРАЕТСЯ БРОСИТЬ В МЯСОРУБКУ ВОЙНЫ. МОЖНО СКАЗАТЬ, ЧТО ЗЕЛЕНСКИЙ УЖЕ НАХОДИТСЯ В ПОЛОЖЕНИИ ГИТЛЕРА В ОКТЯБРЕ 1944 ГОДА, КОГДА ТОТ ПРИЗВАЛ ПОД РУЖЬЕ СТАРИКОВ И ДЕТЕЙ. НЕМЕЦКАЯ ШУТКА ТЕХ ДНЕЙ ВПОЛНЕ ТЕПЕРЬ ПРИМЕНИМА К УКРАИНЕ: "В ФОЛЬКСШТУРМЕ БУДУТ СЛУЖИТЬ ТЕ, КТО УЖЕ УМЕЕТ ХОДИТЬ, И ТЕ, КТО ЕЩЕ МОЖЕТ ХОДИТЬ".</p> <p>СУДЯ ПО ЭТОМУ ЗАКОНОПРОЕКТУ, РЕЖИМ ДЕЛАЕТ ОДНУ ИЗ ОСНОВНЫХ СТАВОК НА УКРАИНЦЕВ, КОТОРЫЕ ВЫСКОЛЬЗНУЛИ ИЗ-ПОД ЕГО КОНТРОЛЯ И ОКАЗАЛИСЬ ЗА ГРАНИЦЕЙ. КИЕВ ИЩЕТ СПОСОБЫ ДОТЯНУТЬСЯ ДО НИХ И ВЕРНУТЬ ДОМОЙ "ХОТЬ ЧУЧЕЛОМ, ХОТЬ ТУШКОЙ". ДЛЯ</p>	<p>THE SCANDALOUS LAW ON TOTAL MOBILIZATION IN UKRAINE, AFTER HEATED MEDIA BATTLES AND ATTEMPTS TO SHIFT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ITS ADOPTION ONTO EACH OTHER, WAS FINALLY DRAGGED THROUGH THE VERKHOVNA RADA. SO FAR IN THE FIRST READING, ALTHOUGH FEW DOUBT THAT WITH CERTAIN AMENDMENTS IT WILL SOON BE FINALLY APPROVED.</p> <p>THIS IS A DOCUMENT TESTIFYING TO THE DESPERATION OF THE UKRAINIAN REGIME, TRYING TO FIND THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF CANNON FODDER THAT IT IS GOING TO THROW INTO THE MEAT GRINDER OF WAR. WE CAN SAY THAT ZELENSKY IS ALREADY IN THE POSITION OF HITLER IN OCTOBER 1944, WHEN HE CALLED THE ELDERLY AND CHILDREN TO ARMS. THE GERMAN JOKE OF THOSE DAYS IS NOW QUITE APPLICABLE TO UKRAINE: "THOSE WHO CAN ALREADY WALK AND THOSE WHO CAN STILL WALK WILL SERVE IN THE VOLKSSTURM."</p> <p>IN THIS BILL, THE REGIME IS MAKING ONE OF ITS MAIN BETS ON UKRAINIANS WHO SLIPPED OUT OF ITS CONTROL AND ENDED UP ABROAD. KYIV IS LOOKING FOR WAYS TO REACH THEM AND BRING THEM HOME "BE IT AS A STUFFED ANIMAL OR AS A CARCASS." FOR THIS PURPOSE, THE BILL PROVIDES</p>

RUSSIAN	ENGLISH
ЭТОГО В ЗАКОНОПРОЕКТЕ ПРЕДУСМОТРЕНА ОБЯЗАТЕЛЬНАЯ ПОСТАНОВКА НА ВОИНСКИЙ УЧЕТ В ЗАГРАНИЧНЫХ УЧРЕЖДЕНИЯХ УКРАИНЫ. В ПРОТИВНОМ СЛУЧАЕ ЛЮДЕЙ БУДУТ ЛИШАТЬ КОНСУЛЬСКИХ УСЛУГ, А ЗНАЧИТ, В ОДИН ПРЕКРАСНЫЙ МОМЕНТ ОНИ ОКАЖУТСЯ БЕЗ ДЕЙСТВУЮЩИХ ПАСПОРТОВ, ЗА ЧЕМ МОЖЕТ ПОСЛЕДОВАТЬ ДЕПОРТАЦИЯ НА РОДИНУ. КРОМЕ ТОГО, ЕЩЕ ДАЖЕ ДО ПРИНЯТИЯ ЗАКОНА В ЦЕЛОМ УКРАИНА НАЧАЛА ЗАМОРАЖИВАТЬ БАНКОВСКИЕ СЧЕТА ВЫЕХАВШИХ ЗА РУБЕЖ МУЖЧИН — ТАКИХ СЛУЧАЕВ СТАНОВИТСЯ ВСЕ БОЛЬШЕ. И ЭТО ТОЖЕ СТАНЕТ СПОСОБОМ ДАВЛЕНИЯ НА БЕЖЕНЦЕВ.	FOR MANDATORY MILITARY REGISTRATION IN FOREIGN INSTITUTIONS OF UKRAINE. OTHERWISE, PEOPLE WILL BE DEPRIVED OF CONSULAR SERVICES, WHICH MEANS THAT AT ONE POINT THEY WILL FIND THEMSELVES WITHOUT VALID PASSPORTS, WHICH MAY BE FOLLOWED BY DEPORTATION TO THEIR HOMELAND. IN ADDITION, EVEN BEFORE THE ADOPTION OF THE LAW AS A WHOLE, UKRAINE BEGAN TO FREEZE THE BANK ACCOUNTS OF MEN WHO HAD GONE ABROAD - SUCH CASES ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE FREQUENT. AND THIS WILL ALSO BECOME A WAY OF PUTTING PRESSURE ON REFUGEES.
УКРАИНА УЖЕ ДАВНО ПОДВОДИТ ЕВРОПУ К МЫСЛИ О ТОМ, ЧТО ТА ДОЛЖНА СПОСОБСТВОВАТЬ ВОЗВРАЩЕНИЮ СБЕЖАВШИХ. В ЯНВАРЕ ЗЕЛЕНСКИЙ, НАХОДЯСЬ В ЭСТОНИИ, ПРЯМО ЗАЯВИЛ О СУДЬБЕ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ: "ЕСЛИ У НИХ ПРИЗЫВНОЙ ВОЗРАСТ, ТО ОНИ ДОЛЖНЫ ПОМОГАТЬ УКРАИНЕ И ДОЛЖНЫ БЫТЬ НА УКРАИНЕ".	UKRAINE HAS LONG BEEN LEADING EUROPE TO THE IDEA THAT IT SHOULD FACILITATE THE RETURN OF THOSE WHO ESCAPED. IN JANUARY, ZELENSKY, WHILE IN ESTONIA, DIRECTLY STATED THE FATE OF REFUGEES: "IF THEY ARE OF CONSCRIPTION AGE, THEN THEY SHOULD HELP UKRAINE AND SHOULD BE IN UKRAINE."
ЕГО СОВЕТНИК СЕРГЕЙ ЛЕЩЕНКО ТОГДА ЖЕ ПОШЕЛ ЕЩЕ ДАЛЬШЕ. В ИНТЕРВЬЮ ШВЕЙЦАРСКОМУ ИЗДАНИЮ ОН ПРЯМО ЗАЯВИЛ: "ПРИНИМАЮЩИЕ СТРАНЫ ДОЛЖНЫ ПРЕКРАТИТЬ ПОДДЕРЖКУ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ, ЧТОБЫ ОНИ МОГЛИ ВЕРНУТЬСЯ ДОМОЙ". НАПОМИМ, ЧТО РОВНО ДЕСЯТЬ ЛЕТ НАЗАД ЛЕЩЕНКО БЫЛ ОДНИМ ИЗ "ДИДЖЕЕВ" ЕВРОМАЙДАНА И ОБЕЩАЛ ТОГДА РАЙСКИЕ КУЩИ И БЕСПРЕПЯТСТВЕННЫЕ ПУТЕШЕСТВИЯ ПО ЕВРОПЕ. ЧТО-ТО В ЕГО ПОЗИЦИИ ИЗМЕНИЛОСЬ.	HIS ADVISER SERGEI LESHCHENKO THEN WENT EVEN FURTHER. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH A SWISS PUBLICATION, HE BLUNTLY STATED: "HOST COUNTRIES MUST STOP SUPPORTING REFUGEES SO THAT THEY CAN RETURN HOME." LET US REMEMBER THAT EXACTLY TEN YEARS AGO LESHCHENKO WAS ONE OF THE "DJS" OF EUROMAIDAN AND THEN PROMISED HEAVEN AND UNHINDERED TRAVEL AROUND EUROPE. SOMETHING IN HIS POSITION CHANGED.
ЭТИ НАМЕКИ И ПРЯМЫЕ ПРИЗЫВЫ КИЕВСКОГО РЕЖИМА НАХОДЯТ ОТКЛИК НА ЗАПАДЕ. ЕЩЕ С ОСЕНИ ПРОШЛОГО ГОДА ПОЛЬША АКТИВНО НАЧАЛА ВЫДАВЛИВАТЬ УКРАИНСКИХ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ, ИСПОЛЬЗУЯ ДЛЯ ЭТОГО ЛЮБУЮ ВОЗМОЖНОСТЬ. ЧЕМУ СОДЕЙСТВУЮТ И СОЕДИНЕННЫЕ ШТАТЫ — ГОСДЕПАРТАМЕНТ ДАЖЕ ВЫДЕЛИЛ ГРАНТЫ ДЛЯ ПОЛЬСКИХ ЖУРНАЛИСТОВ, КОТОРЫЕ ДОЛЖНЫ ОСВЕЩАТЬ УСПЕШНОЕ ВОЗВРАЩЕНИЕ УКРАИНСКИХ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ ДОМОЙ.	THESE HINTS AND DIRECT CALLS FROM THE KYIV REGIME RESONATE IN THE WEST. SINCE THE FALL OF LAST YEAR, POLAND HAS ACTIVELY BEGUN TO SQUEEZE OUT UKRAINIAN REFUGEES, USING EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO DO THIS. THE UNITED STATES IS ALSO CONTRIBUTING TO THIS - THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS EVEN PROVIDED GRANTS FOR POLISH JOURNALISTS TO COVER THE SUCCESSFUL RETURN OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES HOME.

RUSSIAN	ENGLISH
<p>СУДЯ ПО ТОМУ, ЧТО ПОДОБНЫЕ СТАТЬИ ПОЯВЛЯЮТСЯ И В ДРУГИХ ВОСТОЧНОЕВРОПЕЙСКИХ СТРАНАХ, ПОЛЬШЕЙ ГРАНТОВАЯ ПРОГРАММА НЕ ОГРАНИЧИЛАСЬ. ПРАВДА, СТАТЬИ ЭТИ НИКАК НЕ МОГУТ ИЗОБРАЗИТЬ "ИСТОРИЮ УСПЕХА". ТАК, ЧЕШСКИЕ ИЗДАНИЯ ПРИЗНАЮТСЯ, ЧТО УКРАИНСКИЕ БЕЖЕНЦЫ, ЛИШИВШИСЬ ПОСОБИЙ В ПОЛЬШЕ, ЧЕХИИ И СЛОВАКИИ, ЕДУТ НА УКРАИНУ, ПОСКОЛЬКУ "У НИХ НЕТ ИНОГО ВЫХОДА, КРОМЕ КАК ВЕРНУТЬСЯ ДОМОЙ, ГДЕ ОНИ НИЧЕГО НЕ ПОЛУЧАЮТ И ЖИВУТ ЗА СЧЕТ ГУМАНИТАРНОЙ ПОМОЩИ И БЛАГОТВОРИТЕЛЬНОСТИ". А НЕКОТОРЫЕ ВСЕ РАВНО, ДАЖЕ НИЧЕГО НЕ ПОЛУЧАЯ В ЧЕХИИ, ДЕРЖАТСЯ НА СВОИХ СБЕРЕЖЕНИЯХ И НАДЕЮТСЯ ЗАРАБОТАТЬ САМОСТОЯТЕЛЬНО НА ТОРГОВЛЕ С... РОССИЕЙ. ДА-ДА, СО "СТРАНОЙ-АГРЕССОРОМ", КАК НАС ПРЕДСТАВЛЯЮТ ЗАПАДНЫЕ СМИ.</p> <p>ПОКА ЕЩЕ РЕШЕНИЕ О МАССОВОМ ВЫДВОРЕНИИ УКРАИНЦЕВ НЕ ПРИНЯТО, НО РАЗЛИЧНЫЕ ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВА ЕВРОПЫ ПОСТЕПЕННО СОКРАЩАЮТ ИЛИ ПРОСТО ОТМЕНЯЮТ ВЫПЛАТЫ, ПОСОБИЯ, ВЫДЕЛЕНИЕ ПОМЕЩЕНИЙ ПОД ВРЕМЕННОЕ ЖИЛЬЕ. В НЕКОТОРЫХ СТРАНАХ (НАПРИМЕР, В РУМЫНИИ) УКРАИНЦЫ ДАЖЕ ПЫТАЛИСЬ УСТРАИВАТЬ АКЦИИ ПРОТЕСТА ПО ПОВОДУ ЭТОГО. ЕЩЕ БЫ, ВЕДЬ ВСЕГО ДВА ГОДА НАЗАД ИМ ОБЕЩАЛИ, ЧТО ЕВРОПА БУДЕТ ИХ ВСТРЕЧАТЬ "КАК БОГОВ, СПУСТИВШИХСЯ С НЕБЕС". ВИДИМО, ЧТО-ТО ПОШЛО НЕ ТАК.</p>	<p>JUDGING BY THE FACT THAT SIMILAR ARTICLES APPEAR IN OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, THE GRANT PROGRAM IS NOT LIMITED TO POLAND. TRUE, THESE ARTICLES CANNOT IN ANY WAY DEPICT A "SUCCESS STORY." THUS, CZECH PUBLICATIONS ADMIT THAT UKRAINIAN REFUGEES, HAVING LOST BENEFITS IN POLAND, THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA, GO TO UKRAINE BECAUSE "THEY HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO RETURN HOME, WHERE THEY RECEIVE NOTHING AND LIVE OFF HUMANITARIAN AID AND CHARITY." . AND SOME PEOPLE STILL, EVEN WITHOUT RECEIVING ANYTHING IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC, RELY ON THEIR SAVINGS AND HOPE TO EARN MONEY ON THEIR OWN BY TRADING WITH... RUSSIA. YES, YES, WITH THE "AGGRESSOR COUNTRY", AS THE WESTERN MEDIA PRESENT US.</p> <p>THE DECISION ON THE MASS EXPULSION OF UKRAINIANS HAS NOT YET BEEN MADE, BUT VARIOUS EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS ARE GRADUALLY REDUCING OR SIMPLY CANCELING PAYMENTS, BENEFITS, AND THE ALLOCATION OF PREMISES FOR TEMPORARY HOUSING. IN SOME COUNTRIES (FOR EXAMPLE, ROMANIA), UKRAINIANS EVEN TRIED TO ORGANIZE PROTESTS ABOUT THIS. OF COURSE, JUST TWO YEARS AGO THEY WERE PROMISED THAT EUROPE WOULD GREET THEM "LIKE GODS DESCENDING FROM HEAVEN." APPARENTLY SOMETHING WENT WRONG.</p>

NO.	DATE	SOURCES	
		ONLINE MEDIA	
		ORIGINAL (IN RUSSIAN)	IN ENGLISH
1.1	09/02/2024	<u>ЕВРОПА ЗАДУМАЛАСЬ, КАК ВЫТОЛКАТЬ УКРАИНСКИХ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ ...</u>	EUROPE IS THINKING ABOUT HOW TO PUSH UKRAINIAN REFUGEES TO THE FRONT
1.2		<u>ЕВРОПА ЗАДУМАЛАСЬ, КАК ВЫТОЛКАТЬ УКРАИНСКИХ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ ...</u>	
1.3		<u>ЕВРОПА ЗАДУМАЛАСЬ, КАК ВЫТОЛКАТЬ УКРАИНСКИХ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ ...</u>	

		*PRO-RUSSIAN SPUTNIK SOUTH OSSETIA	
1.4		ЕВРОПА ЗАДУМАЛАСЬ, КАК ВЫТОЛКАТЬ УКРАИНСКИХ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ ... ** PRO-RUSSIAN SPUTNIK GEORGIA	
1.5		КАК ВЫТОЛКАТЬ УКРАИНСКИХ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ НА ФРОНТ ***PRO-RUSSIAN MEDIA ON TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED UKRAINIAN TERRITORY	
1.6		ЕВРОПА ЗАДУМАЛАСЬ, КАК ВЫТОЛКАТЬ УКРАИНСКИХ ... - ZOV КИЕВ	
1.7		ЕВРОПА ЗАДУМАЛАСЬ, КАК ВЫТОЛКАТЬ УКРАИНСКИХ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ ...	
2	TELEGRAM		
		ORIGINAL (IN RUSSIAN)	IN ENGLISH
	2.1 09/02/23	HTTPS://T.ME/KORNILOV1968/22119 ЕВРОПА ПО ПРИЗЫВУ ЗЕЛЕНСКОГО НАЧИНАЕТ ПРИДУМЫВАТЬ МЕХАНИЗМЫ ВЫТАЛКИВАНИЯ УКРАИНСКИХ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ ОБРАТНО - УКРАИНА ШИБКО НУЖДАЕТСЯ В ПУШЕЧНОМ МЯСЕ. 40,4K VIEWS 1000 REACTIONS NO COMMENTS ON THE CHANNELS	EUROPE, AT THE CALL OF ZELENSKY, IS BEGINNING TO COME UP WITH MECHANISMS FOR PUSHING UKRAINIAN REFUGEES BACK - UKRAINE IS IN DIRE NEED OF CANNON FODDER. 40,4K VIEWS 1000 REACTIONS NO COMMENTS ON THE CHANNELS

5.2.4 CREDIBILITY

The text is sourced from a Russian-language publication and website, possibly with a pro-Russian bias, given the references to Sputnik media and the portrayal of Ukraine in a negative light. Pro-Russian sources have a particular agenda in shaping perceptions about Ukrainian politics and policies.

5.2.5 TARGET AUDIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT METRICS

Disinformation campaigns frequently target EU citizens to influence their opinions and behaviors regarding various political, social, and economic issues. These campaigns may exploit existing societal divisions, manipulate emotions, or spread false narratives to sway public opinion on specific policies or political candidates. By targeting EU citizens, Russian actors seek to undermine trust in democratic institutions, sow discord, and advance their own geopolitical interests.

Russian actors also target policymakers and government officials within the EU to influence decision-making processes. By disseminating disinformation and propaganda, these actors aim to shape policy outcomes in ways that align with their own agendas. The other potential target audience is media outlets and journalists to amplify false narratives and generate media coverage.

EU institutions and organizations are also potential targets of Russian interference, as they connect a role in shaping EU policies and regulations. By infiltrating these institutions or influencing key decision-makers, Russian actors undermine the EU's unity and effectiveness.

The engagement metrics associated with these fabricated narratives, such as views, likes, reactions, and comments, reflect its resonance across various media channels. While social media platforms play a significant role in amplifying disinformation due to their wide reach and viral nature, it's also spread in online media resources.

5.2.6 IMPACT

The ongoing Russian war against Ukraine has a profound impact on the perception of Ukrainian refugees across Europe and beyond. Through a sophisticated disinformation campaign, Russian narratives like “Ukrainian refugees are dangerous for Europe”, “Europe is tired of refugees from Ukraine” are strategically crafted to serve political agendas that seek to undermine international support for Ukraine and may fuel anti-Western sentiment and hinder diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts.

The ultimate goal is to disrupt the flow of Western aid to Ukraine, diminish the resolve of European nations, and create divisions within societies that have been providing refuge to those fleeing the war. More detailed collection of narratives portraying Ukrainian refugees are presented in Annex 2.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The first working paper of the AI4Debunk project establishes a foundational theoretical framework to guide the analysis of diverse case studies, which will later support a range of objectives, including assessments in communication, sociopolitical dynamics, and the development of AI-driven countermeasures against malicious disinformation efforts. The AI4Debunk project is predicated on the notion that disinformation has evolved into a sophisticated, organized phenomenon that permeates both state and non-state actors, exacerbated by social media, with profound implications for democratic institutions, public health, and societal stability.

The examination of disinformation has gained traction among governments, international organizations, and policy think tanks, each striving to understand and mitigate its impacts. Diverse interpretations and frameworks reflect the multifaceted nature of disinformation, which is increasingly viewed as a component of hybrid threats designed to manipulate emotions and disrupt rational discourse. Key international stakeholders, including the European Union, NATO, and the United Nations, recognize disinformation as a significant security threat, necessitating strategic and policy-based responses.

The AI4Debunk project's theoretical framework aligns with the European Union's approach, characterizing disinformation as an intentional, organized effort with the aim to deceive and, potentially, cause harm to public welfare. Harm may extend to democratic integrity, public health, and security, underscoring the need for stringent countermeasures. As the concept of disinformation continues to evolve, it requires both theoretical and empirical research to expose its complexity.

The proposed structure of disinformation threads encompasses motives, tools, and consequences, offering a multi-dimensional approach to understanding its diverse facets. Disinformation is thus analysed as a dynamic process involving context, content, source credibility, targeted

demographics, and potential impacts. Counter-disinformation strategies require a coordinated, systemic response rooted in a comprehensive analysis of these dimensions.

Focusing on the European Union's response to disinformation, the working paper outlines the regulatory trajectory from 2018, when the EU intensified its approach to content moderation through the Digital Services Act and the 2018 Code of Practice on Disinformation. These policies shifted the responsibility for content oversight to digital platforms, marking a significant evolution in content governance. Simultaneously, the AI Act introduced regulations around artificial intelligence, which, while not specifically targeting disinformation, has the potential to shape AI's role in both disinformation dissemination and detection.

The 2018 Code of Practice on Disinformation aimed to be a key tool against interference in the European public sphere, but its outcomes have been limited. Two primary issues undercut its effectiveness: its reliance on platform self-regulation, which can lead to inconsistent enforcement and conflicts of interest, and its reactive rather than preventive measures. Consequently, responses to disinformation remain nascent and require further refinement to achieve substantive impact.

To test the applicability of the proposed disinformation threads framework for analysing case studies, the AI4Debunk project examined four cases illustrating different elements of disinformation:

French Farmers Against Ukrainian Farmers: The manipulation of a protest video along with the falsification of a respected media outlet's logo and the fabrication of quotes attributed to a prominent French syndicalist, illustrates how disinformation can be weaponized to undermine public support for Ukraine in its ongoing conflict with Russia. The broader implications of this case are clear: disinformation campaigns like this one are designed not just to deceive individuals, but to influence public opinion and, by extension, political decision-making in the West. By fostering division and scepticism about support for Ukraine, Russia aims to weaken the EU's unified stance and reduce the resources dedicated to Ukraine's defence.

No More Wind Power in France: This case exemplifies a disinformation campaign aimed at manipulating public opinion in Bulgaria to promote anti-EU and anti-renewable energy sentiments. This false narrative misrepresents a decision by French authorities to modify wind turbine noise measurement protocols as a complete ban on wind power in France. The disinformation aligns with the interests of pro-Russian and fossil fuel advocates in Bulgaria, who are resistant to the EU Green Deal and renewable energy policies, particularly wind energy. This disinformation targets Bulgarian audiences, particularly Eurosceptics and nationalists, using emotionally charged false headlines to stir opposition against the EU's climate policies.

Ukraine as a Western Colony: The case reveals how Russia uses disinformation to frame Ukraine as a pawn of Western powers, portraying the country's alignment with the EU and NATO as manipulated rather than a sovereign choice. This narrative appeals to pro-Russian, nationalist, and anti-Western audiences by fostering distrust of the West and suggesting that Ukraine's geopolitical direction is dictated by foreign interests. Such messages are strategically deployed to diminish Ukraine's autonomy and to justify Russia's aggression as defensive rather than expansionist. By framing the West as manipulative and exploitative, the disinformation seeks to erode trust in Western institutions and leaders, complicating diplomatic efforts and potentially reducing international support for Ukraine.

Ukrainian Refugees: By exploiting existing social tensions, prejudices, and fears related to immigration in Europe, Russian narratives aim to undermine support for Ukrainian refugees and, by extension, weaken Western solidarity with Ukraine. These fabricated claims about Ukrainian refugees are part of a larger

strategy to erode public and political backing for Ukraine. This case highlights how disinformation can manipulate sensitive topics like immigration to serve broader political agendas, in this instance, to weaken European support for Ukraine and bolster Russia's standing in the conflict.

Disinformation represents a complex and evolving threat, which requires constant adaptation in order to elaborate comprehensive responses. By integrating insights from political science, communication theory, psychology, and technology, policymakers and researchers can better understand the complex nature of disinformation's mechanisms and develop more effective counter strategies, thus minimizing its impact. The AI4Debunk project, along with other international initiatives, will benefit from this multi-faceted approach, fostering a more resilient and informed society capable of countering disinformation in its many forms.

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ANNEX 1- ADDITIONAL CASES AT THE BEGINNING OF RUSSIAN FULL-SCALE INVASION- NARRATIVE IN FOREIGN PRO-RUSSIAN MEDIA: UKRAINE IS A COLONY OF THE WEST|THE WEST CONTROLS UKRAINE AND USES IT FOR ITS OWN PURPOSES

Link

Date: 02.03.2022

Original text: *Miért indít háborút Oroszország? Az örülettel nem tudunk mit kezdeni, de ha Putyin racionális alapon döntött az Ukrajna elleni háború megindításáról, akkor meg kellene értenünk miért tette ezt. Ha Putyin megőrült, ha Putyin örült meg, akkor ezt a háborút csak túl kell élnünk valahogy, nagyon más dolgunk nem lehet vele. De mi van akkor, ha a Nyugat cselekedetei vezettek, akár az oroszok meg nem értéséből következően ehhez a helyzethez? A hibái és a gonosz cselekedetei alól nem ment fel senkit az, hogy más is gonosz és ostoba volt. Ha Putyin nem örült meg, hanem a számára releváns tények ismeretében döntött a háború mellett, akkor ez a háború az USA és az EU felelőssége is.*

A történelemben sok nyugatról érkező hadsereg járt már ezeken a tájakon, igaz most csak amerikai vállalatok vannak ott, de mindig így szokott kezdődni, és az amerikai beszivárgás meg már nyolc éve zajlik.

Translation: *Why is Russia starting a war? We cannot deal with madness, but if Putin made a rational decision to go to war against Ukraine, we should understand why he did so. If Putin is mad, if Putin is mad, then we will just have to survive this war somehow, we have very little else to do with it. But what if it was the actions of the West, even the incomprehension of the Russians, that led to this situation? The fact that others were also evil and stupid did not absolve anyone of their mistakes and evil actions. If Putin is not mad, but has decided to go to war knowing the facts that are relevant to him, then this war is also the responsibility of the US and the EU.*

There's a history of armies from the West coming into these landscapes, it's true that only US companies are there now, but that's how it always starts, and the US infiltration has been going on for eight years.

Link

Date: 06/03/2022

Original text: *Ukrajna eddig is a Nyugat és Oroszország egyre élesedő geopolitikai szembenállásának felvonulási terepe volt, és most valódi csatatérre változott.*

Translation: *Ukraine has always been the staging ground for the growing geopolitical confrontation between the West and Russia, and now it has become a real battlefield.*

Link

Date: 26/02/2022

Original text: *A politika mozgatórugója köztudomásúlag az érdek. Az olykor nagyon kicsinyes anyagi érdek. Szerintem, minden homályos történelmi és nemzetközi jogokra való hivatkozás helyett, azt kellene keresni Ukrajna esetében is... Talán ide tartozik, talán nem, de a hír szerint legalább 120 palagázzal megrakott amerikai és európai hajó indult el az USA-ból Európa felé. Ami köztudomásúlag – legalábbis ez idő szerint – drágább, mint az orosz gáz, és a tárolása sem megoldott. Mit lehet erre mondani? Gáz, az van...*

Translation: *It is well known that the driving force of politics is interest. Sometimes very petty material interest. I think that, instead of all the vague references to history and international law, that is what we should be looking for in the case of Ukraine... Maybe it is relevant, maybe it is not, but there are reports that at least 120 US and European ships loaded with shale gas have left the US for Europe. Which is known*

to be - at least at this time - more expensive than Russian gas, and the storage of it is not solved. What can be said? Gas, that is...

Link

Date: 28/02/2022

Original text: *Ha azt a védőhálót sem merték nekik megadni, hogy NATO tagok lehessenek, akkor meg mégis mire számítottak? Miért lebegtették Ukrajna státuszát, mint egy léggömböt, ha nem történt semmi? Mi ez, ha nem egy jól átgondolt, szándékos és bujtatott provokáció, amivel az oroszok bajuszát rángtatták?*

Translation: *If they didn't dare to give them the safety net to become NATO members, what did they expect? Why did they float Ukraine's status like a balloon if nothing happened? What is this if not a well thought-out, deliberate and covert provocation to pull the Russians' moustaches?*

Link

Date: 09/03/2022

Original text: *Ha lehet, most még ennél is aggasztóbb azonban a halálos fegyverek Ukrajnára öntése kapcsán látható lelkesedés. Úgy tűnik, Európa semmit nem tanult a múltjából, de a mostani háborúhoz vezető hibáiból sem. Ráadásul ezek a fegyverek a hadi helyzet megfordításához kevesek, a vérontáshoz, a háború elhúzódásához azonban éppen elegendők. S akkor arról még nem beszéltünk, hogy Európa ezzel lassan már a konfliktusban érintett féllé válik, ezzel pedig elvágja az esélyét annak, hogy béketeremtőként lépjen fel. Mintha tudatosan taszítaná el magától ezt a lehetőséget az Európai Unió! Ez a politika végképp lezárja a párbeszéd lehetőségét Oroszországgal is. Ami pedig egyáltalán nem erősíti az európai biztonságot.*

Translation: *But even more worrying, if anything, is the enthusiasm for pouring lethal weapons into Ukraine. It seems that Europe has learned nothing from its past, nor from the mistakes that led to the current war. Moreover, these weapons are not enough to turn the tide of war, but they are just enough to cause bloodshed and prolong the war. And we have not even mentioned the fact that Europe is slowly becoming a party to the conflict, thereby cutting off its chances of acting as a peacemaker. It is as if the European Union were deliberately denying itself this opportunity! This policy is also closing the door to dialogue with Russia. And that does not strengthen European security at all.*

Link

Date: 23/03/2022

Original text: *Profesor politologie - za viníka označuje Západ, který z Ukrajiny dělal člena NATO, i když oficiálně členem nebyla. USA prý budou „bojovat do posledního Ukrajince“, a pokud by Rusové začali prohrávat, tak dle Mearsheimera vytáhnou větší zbraně a Ukrajinu zničí. „Pokud by Ukrajinci byli chytrí, tak by se od USA distancovali,“ míní.*

Translation: *The article mentions the fault of the West, which made Ukraine a member of NATO, although it was not officially a member. The US is "fighting to the last Ukrainian", and if the russians begin to lose, then, according to Professor Mearsheimer, they will pull out bigger weapons and destroy Ukraine. "If Ukrainians were smart, they would distance themselves from the US," he says.*

Link

Date: 24/02/2022

Original text: *Článek uvádí, že válka ruské federace proti Ukrajině je vlastně vojenskou operací ruska proti kyjevskému režimu, nastolené před osmi lety státním převratem a likvidací demokraticky zvoleného prezidenta a jeho vlády. rusko ničí vojenskou infrastrukturu instalovanou Západem na území Ukrajiny.*

Translation: *The article states that the russian Federation's war against Ukraine is actually russia's military operation against the Kyiv regime, established eight years ago through a coup d'état and liquidation of the democratically elected president and his government. russia is destroying the military infrastructure installed by the West on the territory of Ukraine.*

Link

Date: 07/03/2022

Original text: *Válka na Ukrajině byla plodem jednostranné ruské, hegemonické, „imperialistické“ vůle, vůle „paranoika“, „diktátora“. Podívejme se na fakta. Od „revoluce“ v roce 2014 se Ukrajina posunula ke sbližování se západními zájmy pod americkým vlivem. Od té doby Ukrajina neustále žádá o vstup do NATO, včetně možnosti instalovat tam jaderné zbraně.*

Translation: *The war in Ukraine was the result of a unilateral russian, hegemonic, "imperialist" will, the will of a "paranoid", a "dictator". Let's look at the facts. Since the "revolution" of 2014, Ukraine has moved to align with Western interests under American influence. Since then, Ukraine has continuously applied to join NATO, including the possibility of installing nuclear weapons there.*

Link

Date: 27/02/2022

Original text: *Ukrajinská armáda a vodcovia nacistických práporov plánujú pripraviť rozsiahlu USA se o základnu NATO snažila již na Krymu, kde jim to nevyšlo a proto již osmým rokem podporují a financují válečný konflikt na východě Ukrajiny.*

Translation: *The Ukrainian army and the leaders of the Nazi battalions plan to prepare a large-scale US already tried for a NATO base in Crimea, where they failed, and that is why they have been supporting and financing the war conflict in the east of Ukraine for the eighth year.*

Link

Date: 16/03/2022

Original text: *ruská rozvědka zjistila, že Daeš teroristé byli podrobeni výcviku na americké vojenské základně al-Tanf v Syrii a poslání na Ukrajinu. Bylo to několik desítek těch, které Američané vypustili z vězení a vycvičili je v rozvrtných a teroristických bojových metodách s přímým zaměřením na situaci v Donbasu. Jejich používání civilistů jako živý lidský štít je jedna z bojových metod teroristické skupiny ISIS, kterou Američané rovněž založili a vycvičili.*

Translation: *russian intelligence has discovered that Daesh terrorists were trained at the US military base al-Tanf in Syria and sent to Ukraine. It was several dozen of those who were released from prison by the Americans and trained in subversive and terrorist combat methods with a direct focus on the situation in Donbass. Their use of civilians as human shields is one of the fighting methods of the ISIS terrorist group, which the Americans also founded and trained.*

Link

Date: 07/03/2022

Original text: *Tak zwani «partnerzy zachodni», którzy są ściśle zaangażowani w zarządzanie ukraińskimi siłami zbrojnymi w obecnych warunkach i którzy wcześniej pełnili rolę instruktorów dla armii ukraińskiej, nie mogą nie rozumieć, że nieletni i niewyszkoleni młodzi mężczyźni nieuchronnie zginą w trakcie działań bojowych.*

Translation: *The so-called "Western partners", who are closely involved in the management of the Ukrainian armed forces under the present conditions and who previously acted as instructors for the Ukrainian army, must not fail to understand that underage and untrained young men will inevitably die in the course of combat operations.*

Link

Date: 30/03/2022

Original text: *Chojność polskich władz... tylko nie dla Polaków.*

Translation: *The generosity of the Polish authorities... but not for Poles.*

Link

Date: 26/02/2022

Original text: *Ucraina, il Presidente è una marionetta nelle di Macron! È stato lui ad imporgli di non negoziare: vuole una guerra prolungata per interessi superiori*

Translation: *Ukraine, the President is a puppet in Macron's! It was he who forced him not to negotiate: he wants a prolonged war for superior interests.*

Link

Date: 25/02/2022

Original text: *A che gioco sta realmente giocando l'Ucraina di Zelensky? Una verità inquietante. "Zelensky avesse scelto di sacrificare l'interesse nazionale del suo popolo al superiore interesse della NATO degli stati uniti e dalla promessa di ingresso nell'unione europea. La vicenda politica di Zelensky ripeto dopo aver dimessoso i panni del comico." "La NATO e l'America usano l'Ucraina come bastone per colpire la Russia di Putin."*

Translation: *What game is Zelensky's Ukraine really playing? A disturbing truth. "Zelensky had chosen to sacrifice the national interest of his people to the superior interest of the US NATO and the promise of entry into the European Union. The political story of Zelensky I repeat after leaving the role of the comedian." "NATO and America use Ukraine as a stick to hit Putin's Russia."*

Link

Date: 09/03/2022

Original text: *La Russia per la pace chiede neutralità dell'Ucraina. Ma UE e USA non accetteranno!*

Translation: *Russia for peace calls for the neutrality of Ukraine. But the EU and the US will not accept!*

Link

Date: 06/03/2022

Original text: *Ucraina, la doppia bomba del professor Contrì: Soros e quei laboratori sui virus. Il delinquente ammette candidamente che Zelensky sia un suo burattino, e gli Usa confermano di fare ricerche pericolose per l'umanità*

Translation: *Ukraine, Professor Contrì's double bomb: Soros and those virus labs. The delinquent candidly admits that Zelensky is a puppet of him, and the US confirms that it is doing research that is dangerous for humanity*

Link

Date: 08/06/2022

Original text: *Atlantické námořní velmoci – především USA a Velká Británie – si toho jsou vědomy a investují velké množství prostředků, aby Rusko na Ukrajině krvácelo až do případného zhroutení, nebo aby uvázlo v Pyrrhově vítězství spojeném s neúnosnými náklady, i kdyby samotná Ukrajina měla být srovnána se zemí. Washington a Londýn potřebují podkopat geopolitické výhledy Ruska dřív než rozvine nějaké partnerství s Německem, a použití Ukrajiny jako potraviny pro děla je praktický způsob, jak toho dosáhnout, aniž by sami*

byli zataženi do přímé konfrontace s Ruskem. Takhle nemusí dělat nic víc, než podpořit Kyjev štědrými dodávkami zpravodajských informací, zbraní, diplomatické podpory a hotovosti.

Translation: *The Atlantic naval powers - especially the USA and Great Britain - are aware of this and are investing large amounts of resources to bleed Russia in Ukraine to the point of possible collapse, or to get stuck in a Pyrrhic victory associated with unbearable costs, even if Ukraine itself were to be razed to the ground. Washington and London need to undermine Russia's geopolitical outlook before it develops any partnership with Germany, and using Ukraine as cannon fodder is a practical way to do this without being drawn into a direct confrontation with Russia themselves. That way, they don't have to do anything more than support Kyiv with generous supplies of intelligence, weapons, diplomatic support and cash.*

Link

Date: 18/06/2022

Original text: *Na druhej strane, britský premiér Boris Johnson navrhol začať rozsiahly výcvikový program pre vojakov ukrajinských ozbrojených síl. Jonson navrhol začať program s možnosťou výcviku až 10 tisíc vojakov ukrajinskej armády každých 120 dní. Asi vypočítal „systém úbytku vojakov“ vopred. Koľko takých výcvikových programov chce zorganizovať? Zjavne chce bojovať proti Rusku do posledného Ukrajinca...*

Translation: *On the other hand, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson proposed to start a large-scale training program for soldiers of the Ukrainian armed forces. Jonson suggested starting a program with the possibility of training up to 10,000 soldiers of the Ukrainian army every 120 days. He probably calculated the "soldier loss system" in advance. How many such training programs does he want to organize? Apparently, he wants to fight against Russia to the last Ukrainian...*

Link

Date: 27/06/2022

Original text: *Večer ukrajinské média informovali, že britský premiér Boris Johnson počas samitu G7 nahováral francúzskeho prezidenta Emmanuela Macarona, aby v Paríži podporili pokračovanie vojny až do pre Ukrajinu víťazného konca /presnejšie – do posledného Ukrajinca/.*

Translation: *In the evening, the Ukrainian media reported that during the G7 summit, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson persuaded French President Emmanuel Macron to support the continuation of the war in Paris until a victorious end for Ukraine /more precisely - until the last Ukrainian/.*

Link

Date: 26/06/2022

Original text: *No predsa zasa iným konfliktom, na dobrej a starej Ukrajine. Treba pripomenúť, že Barack Obama, keď sa ako mladý senátor z Chicaga, ktorý sa nevel'mi vyznal vo svete, dostal do Bieleho domu, spomenul si na svojho múdreho učiteľa z Colombia university Zbigniewa Brzezinského, ktorý sa stal jeho poradcom. Obama si znovu preštudoval Veľkú šachovnicu a zvlášť kapitolu o Ukrajine a vypočul si neoceniteľné autorove rady. Na opätovné pripomenutie: na štátnom prevrate v roku 2014 v Kyjeve sa podieľali Američania nielen zákulisnými ťahmi, ale aj piatimi miliardami dolárov. /Pozri vyjadrenie pani Viktórie Nulandovej, vtedajšej námestníčky Hillary Clintonovej, ministerky zahraničia práve vo vláde Baracka Obamu/.*

Translation: *But after all, another conflict, in the good old Ukraine. It should be remembered that Barack Obama, when he got to the White House as a young senator from Chicago who did not know much about the world, remembered his wise teacher from Colombia University, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who became his advisor. Obama re-studied The Great Chessboard and especially the chapter on Ukraine and listened to the author's invaluable advice. To remind again: the Americans participated in the coup d'état in 2014 in Kyiv not only with behind-the-scenes moves, but also with five billion dollars. /See the statement of Mrs. Viktoria Nuland, Hillary Clinton's deputy at the time, Secretary of State in Barack Obama's government/.*

Link

Date: 29/06/2022

Original text: *A Donbassz régiót együttesen alkotó köztársaságok 2014-ben kikiáltották ki függetlenségüket Ukrajnától, miután egy nyugati támogatású puccs megbuktatta a demokratikusan megválasztott elnököt, Viktor Janukovicsot.*

Translation: *The republics that together make up the Donbass region declared independence from Ukraine in 2014, after a Western-backed coup overthrew the democratically elected president, Viktor Yanukovich.*

Link

Date: 24/06/2022

Original text: *Oroszországot módszeres provokációkkal belerántották egy lokális háborúba abban a reményben, hogy az időközben odakészített fegyverekkel felszerelt ukrán ellenállásba beletörik majd az oroszok bicskája.*

Translation: *Russia has been systematically provoked into a local war, in the hope that the Ukrainian resistance, now armed with weapons, will be cut by the Russian knife.*

Link

Date: 25/06/2022

Original text: *Hogy az egész világ kezd belefáradni az Ukrajnában folytatott amerikai proxy háborúba, azt jól jelzik a különböző német, amerikai szakértők és tanácsadók megnyilvánulásai.*

Translation: *The fact that the whole world is getting tired of the US proxy war in Ukraine is well illustrated by the statements of various German and American experts and advisors.*

Link

Date: 10/06/2022

Original text: *Ukrajna sem fog leállni, mert ez az elit bukását hozná, ráadásul a nyugati segítséggel képes elhúzni a háborút. Ha nem is a végtelenségig, de nagyon sokáig. A Nyugat, elsősorban az angolszászok pedig most már az „utolsó ukránig” készek harcolni.*

Translation: *Ukraine will not stop either, because that would bring the downfall of the elite, and with Western help it can drag out the war. If not indefinitely, then for a very long time. And the West, especially the Anglo-Saxons, are now prepared to fight to the 'last Ukrainian'.*

Link

Date: 01/06/2022

Original text: *Értelemszerűen az amerikaiak számára meg az a legfontosabb pozíció, hogy egy általuk irányított ukrán kormány legyen, amit legalább a maradék Ukrajna lakossága elfogad, hogy a proxyháborújuk működőképes maradjon.*

Translation: *The most important position for the Americans is, of course, to have a Ukrainian government that they control and that is accepted by at least the rest of the Ukrainian population, so that their proxy war can remain viable.*

Link

Date: 07/06/2022

Original text: *Mert ahogy Zelenszkij, úgy Fekete-Győr, ahogy A Nép Szolgája, úgy a Momentum is: abszolút ügynökök, akik idegen érdekeket szolgálnak ki, a saját hazájukkal szemben.*

Translation: *Because like Zelensky, like Blacky-Gyor, like the Servant of the People, like Momentum: they are absolute agents, serving foreign interests against their own country.*

Link

Date: 15/06/2022

Original text: *Az amerikai védelmi miniszter Brüsszelbe utazott, hogy kitalálják, miként lehetne rávenni Ukrajnát a háború folytatására.*

Translation: The US Secretary of Defence has travelled to Brussels to try to find a way to persuade Ukraine to continue the war.

Link

Date: 02/06/2022

Original text: *Más kérdés, hogy vajon tisztában vannak-e azzal, hogy nekik köszönhető a kijevi Majdan téren kirobbant polgárháború, amelyben rengetegen életüket veszítették, és amely után egy olyan – főként amerikai irányítással mozgatott – kormány jött létre, amelynek tagjai közül volt, aki aznap tette le az állampolgári esküt, amikor parlamenti képviselő lett...?*

Translation: *The other question is whether they are aware that they are responsible for the civil war in Majdan Square in Kyiv, in which many people lost their lives, and which led to the creation of a government - mainly led by the Americans - whose members included one who took the oath of citizenship on the day he became a Member of Parliament...?*

Link

Date: 19/06/2022

Original text: *Mivel a kijevi politikai elit nagyban függ a washingtoni irányítástól, így valószínűsíthető, hogy az ukrán vezérkar csak másodlagos tisztséget tölt be a saját hadseregében, és ha nem is nyugati katonák, de a Nyugat által irányított politikai vezetők kezében összpontosul a katonai irányítás.*

Translation: *With the political elite in Kyiv heavily dependent on Washington's leadership, it is likely that the Ukrainian general staff will be a secondary function in its own army, with military control concentrated, if not in the hands of Western soldiers, then in the hands of Western-directed political leaders.*

Link

Date: 20/06/2022

Original text: *Zelenszkij ukrán múzeumi műtárgyakkal fizet a Nyugatnak a fegyverekért*

Translation: *Zelensky pays the West for weapons with Ukrainian museum artefacts*

Link

Date: 09/06/2022

Original text: *A DNR Ukrajnát vádolja katonai agresszióval a szakadár állam ellen, amely először 2014-ben, az Egyesült Államok által támogatott kijevi puccsot követően kiáltotta ki függetlenségét.*

Translation: *Neo-Nazi "Azov" fighters held out for a month in an industrial complex in the Black Sea port city before surrendering on 20 May.*

The DNR accuses Ukraine of military aggression against the breakaway state, which first declared independence in 2014 following a US-backed coup in Kyiv.

Link

Date: 20/06/2022

Original text: *Ha a Biden-adminisztráció eléri a módját, Kijev továbbra is bázisként fog működni a Moszkvát fenyegető új erők felépítéséhez.*

Translation: *If the Biden administration gets its way, Kyiv will continue to act as a base for building up new forces that threaten Moscow.*

Link

Date: 11/06/2022

Original text: "Kriegshetzer": Ungarischer Ministerpräsident Orbán gibt dem Finanzier Soros Schuld an Ukraine-Krise. Der ungarische Ministerpräsident Viktor Orbán erklärt, bestimmte Finanzkreise hätten ein Interesse daran, den Krieg in der Ukraine zu verlängern. Der Milliardär George Soros sei einer der Nutznießer des Ukraine-Konflikts, betont er.

Translation: "Warmongers": Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán blames the financier Soros for the Ukraine crisis. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán says certain financial circles have an interest in prolonging the war in Ukraine. Billionaire George Soros is one of the beneficiaries of the Ukraine conflict, he emphasizes.

Link

Date: 16/06/2022

Original text: Papst wirft NATO gezielte Provokation des Ukraine-Kriegs vor – "Das werden wir auch weiterhin tun". Wir werden so weitermachen wie bisher, rechtfertigte NATO-Generalsekretär Jens Stoltenberg die Russland-Strategie der Allianz, nachdem Papst Franziskus dem Westen erneut eine Mitschuld am Ukraine-Krieg gegeben hat.

Translation: Pope accuses NATO of deliberate provocation of the Ukraine war - "We will continue to do that". We will continue as before, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg justified the alliance's Russia strategy after Pope Francis once again blamed the West for the Ukraine war.

ANNEX 2- ADDITIONAL CASES AT THE BEGINNING OF RUSSIAN FULL-SCALE INVASION- NARRATIVE PORTRAYING UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Link

Date: 03/06/2022

Original text: Mert az elmúlt három hónapban már nem egyszer olvashattuk, hogy az ukrán menekültekre is ráépültek bűnözői körök. Lengyelországban például egész bandák foglalkoztak az elmenekült hölgyek becserkészésével, elszédítésével, elrablásával. Újabb lendületet kapott a prostitúció, ezzel megnőtt a veszélye a nemi betegségek, az AIDS, a tuberkulózis vagy éppen a Covid-19 terjedésének.

Translation: Because we have read more than once in the last three months that Ukrainian refugees have been targeted by criminal networks. In Poland, for example, entire gangs have been involved in stalking, seducing and kidnapping the women who have fled. Prostitution has been given a new impetus, increasing the risk of the spread of venereal diseases, AIDS, tuberculosis and even Covid-19.

Link

Date: 21/06/2022

Original text: Sprawa ukraińskich nacjonalistów w Polsce nabiera tempa. Problem uchodźców z Ukrainy jest dotkliwy w całej Europie, ale przede wszystkim w Polsce, zarówno ze względu na relacje historyczne, jak i geografę. Zaczęło się od umieszczania flag ukraińskich na instytucjach państwowych (zarówno razem z polską, jak i zamiast niej), na centralnych placach, a nawet na pomnikach i cmentarzach. Biegających i krzyczących agresywnych uchodźców ukraińskich, a także tłumy „sympatyków” lub tych, którzy po prostu chcą krzyczeć z byle powodu, można teraz spotkać niemal na całym świecie. Kwestia ukraińska jest obecnie tak nudna dla dotkniętych kryzysem ekonomicznym obywateli Europy, że starcia, bójki, a czasem zabójstwa rodzimych obywateli i tzw. uchodźców ukraińskich są na porządku dziennym.

Translation: The case of Ukrainian nationalists in Poland is gaining momentum. The problem of refugees from Ukraine is acute throughout Europe, but above all in Poland, both in terms of historical relations and geography. It started with placing Ukrainian flags on state institutions (both together with and instead of Polish ones), on central squares, and even on monuments and cemeteries. Running and screaming aggressive Ukrainian refugees, as well as crowds of "sympathizers" or those who simply want to shout for any reason, can now be found almost all over the world. The Ukrainian issue is so boring for European citizens affected by the economic crisis that clashes, fights, and sometimes killings of native citizens and the so-called Ukrainian refugees are on the agenda.

Link

Date: 03/06/2022

Original text: Premier Polski bardziej troszczy się o Ukraińców niż o Polaków

Translation: The Prime Minister of Poland cares more for Ukrainians than for Poles

Link

Date: 21/06/2022

Original text: Sprawa ukraińskich nacjonalistów w Polsce nabiera tempa. Problem uchodźców z Ukrainy jest dotkliwy w całej Europie, ale przede wszystkim w Polsce, zarówno ze względu na relacje historyczne, jak i geografę. Zaczęło się od umieszczania flag ukraińskich na instytucjach państwowych (zarówno razem z polską, jak i zamiast niej), na centralnych placach, a nawet na pomnikach i cmentarzach. Biegających i krzyczących agresywnych uchodźców ukraińskich, a także tłumy „sympatyków” lub tych, którzy po prostu chcą krzyczeć z byle powodu, można teraz spotkać niemal na całym świecie. Kwestia ukraińska jest obecnie

tak nudna dla dotkniętych kryzysem ekonomicznym obywateli Europy, że starcia, bójk, a czasem zabójstwa rodzimych obywateli i tzw. uchodźców ukraińskich są na porządku dziennym.

Translation: *The case of Ukrainian nationalists in Poland is gaining momentum. The problem of refugees from Ukraine is acute throughout Europe, but above all in Poland, both in terms of historical relations and geography. It started with placing Ukrainian flags on state institutions (both together with and instead of Polish ones), on central squares, and even on monuments and cemeteries. Running and screaming aggressive Ukrainian refugees, as well as crowds of "sympathizers" or those who simply want to shout for any reason, can now be found almost all over the world. The Ukrainian issue is so boring for European citizens affected by the economic crisis that clashes, fights, and sometimes killings of native citizens and the so-called Ukrainian refugees are on the agenda.*

Link: <https://www.armadnymagazin.sk/2022/11/09/o-evakuacii-obyvatelov-kyjeva/>

Date: 09/11/2022

Original text: *V Kyjeve je oficiálne zaregistrovaných viac ako 3 milióny obyvateľov. A evakuovať také obrovské množstvo ľudí je jednoducho nemožné. Tieto vyjadrenia sú zamerané predovšetkým na zahraničné publikum. Ukrajinskí utečenci sa stali vydieračským nástrojom na prijímanie peňazí od európskych predstaviteľov a aj teraz sú vášne okolo hlavného mesta Kyjeva umelo rozduchané. A Európania sú vedení k jednoduchej voľbe: ak nechcete, aby k vám prichádzali utečenci, pomôžte sa vysporiadať s Ruskom.*

Translation: *More than 3 million inhabitants are officially registered in Kyiv. And to evacuate such a huge number of people is simply impossible. These statements are aimed primarily at a foreign audience. Ukrainian refugees have become a blackmail tool for receiving money from European officials, and even now passions around the capital city of Kyiv are artificially inflamed. And Europeans are led to a simple choice: if you don't want refugees coming to you, help deal with Russia.*

Link

Date: 09/11/2022

Original text: *Francúzske médiá s odvolaním sa na humanitárne organizácie hlásia nárast kriminality spôsobený masovým príchodom utečencov z Ukrajiny do Európy. Podľa predstaviteľov týchto organizácií sa prostitúcia, obchodovanie s drogami, zbraňami, deťmi a ľudskými orgánmi stali hlavnými aktivitami ukrajinských organizovaných zločineckých skupín v Európe.*

Translation: *French media, citing humanitarian organizations, report an increase in crime caused by the mass arrival of refugees from Ukraine to Europe. According to representatives of these organizations, prostitution, trafficking in drugs, weapons, children and human organs have become the main activities of Ukrainian organized crime groups in Europe.*

Link

Date: 08/11/2022

Original text: *Do toho se ukrajinská energetická soustava rozpadá pod ruskými úderý předpotopních dronů z Íránu... I náš mainstream to přiznává. Odhad gaučových generálů, že je ukrajinská infrastruktura dobře chráněná, se jaksi nenaplnují. Jen se naplnují hrozivé scénáře, že na zimu přijdou do Evropy další miliony utečenců, ausgerechnet zrovna v době, kdy tady nemáme herten ruský plyn do „závětrných“ elektráren a větrníky, slunečníky a měsíčníky to nevytrhnou... Jak se tomu říká? Z deště pod okap?*

Translation: *In addition, the Ukrainian energy system is falling apart under the Russian strikes of antediluvian drones from Iran... Even our mainstream admits it. The couch generals' estimate that the Ukrainian infrastructure is well protected somehow does not come true. The dire scenarios that millions more refugees will come to Europe for the winter are just coming true, ausgerechten just at a time when*

we don't have Russian gas here for "leeward" power plants and windmills, parasols and moonshine won't tear it away... What do you call it? From the rain under the gutter?

Link

Date: 14/11/2022

Original text: *Marsz Niepodległości 11 listopada 2022 pokazał, że teraz i my zbuntowaliśmy się przeciwko jawnemu chamstwu Ukrainy. Najbardziej oburza nas niechęć uchodźców do szukania pracy i życia z półki. Tak uważa ponad 70% Polaków ankietowanych przez lokalny ośrodek IBRiS.*

Translation: *The Independence March on November 11, 2022 showed that now we too have rebelled against the obvious rudeness of Ukraine. We are most outraged by the reluctance of refugees to look for work and life off the shelf. This is the opinion of over 70% of Poles surveyed by the local IBRiS centre.*

Link

Date: 14/11/2022

Original text: *Wszyscy są przyzwyczajeni do skandalów z obrażaniem przez ukraińskich uchodźców w Europie – nikogo nie zdziwi wiadomość o kolejnej dumnej ukraińskiej kobiecie, która domaga się, żeby sprzedawca w czeskim sklepie lub sprzedawca na polskim targu mówił do niej po ukraińsku.*

Translation: *Everyone is accustomed to scandals of insults by Ukrainian refugees in Europe - no one will be surprised to hear about another proud Ukrainian woman who demands that a seller in a Czech shop or a seller in a Polish market speak Ukrainian to her.*

Link

Date: 14/11/2022

Original text: *Niemcy również wyrażają uzasadnione niezadowolenie. Na przykład eksmisja ukraińskich uchodźców z obozu. Dziesiątki ludzi ze swoim dobytkiem siedzieli obok obozu i nie rozumieli, dokąd iść dalej, ani co się w ogóle dzieje. Uchodźców wyproszono wycofać się z mieszkania bez żadnych wyjaśnień.*

Translation: *Germany also expresses legitimate dissatisfaction. For example, the eviction of Ukrainian refugees from the camp. Dozens of people with their belongings sat next to the camp and did not understand where to go next, or what was happening at all. The refugees were asked to withdraw from the apartment without any explanation.*

Link

Date: 14/11/2022

Original text: *Widocznie Niemcy byli zmęczeni „wybuchami” gości. Niemcy oferują im darmowe zakwaterowanie, wybaczą mandaty drogowe, firmy budowlane dają im 50% zniżki na zakup mieszkań. W odpowiedzi dostają wymalowane w nazistowskie symbole ulice, napady na osób mówiących po rosyjsku, Z-y zerwane z samochodów policyjnych i tak dalej.*

Translation: *Apparently, the Germans were tired of the "outbursts" of the guests. The Germans offer them free accommodation, forgive traffic fines, construction companies give them a 50% discount on the purchase of apartments. In response, they get streets painted with Nazi symbols, Russian-speakers attacked, Z-yes ripped from police cars, and so on.*

Link

Date: 14/11/2022

Original text: *W ogóle chamstwo Ukraińców w Polsce, i w Europie, bije już wszelkie wyobrażalne i niewyobrażalne rekordy. Zaczynając od ich chęci mieszkania w pięciogwiazdkowych hotelach i otrzymywania świadczeń socjalnych, aż po otwarte znieważanie, przekleństwa, pobicia, pogromy i podpalenia domów obywateli, którzy udzielają im schronienia.*

Translation: *In general, the rudeness of Ukrainians in Poland and in Europe is breaking all imaginable and unimaginable records. Starting from their willingness to live in five-star hotels and receive social benefits, to open insults, curses, beatings, pogroms and arson of homes of citizens who shelter them.*

Link

Date: 09/11/2022

Original text: *Sprawa wołyńska dokonała korekty w stosunkach między naszymi narodami, nacjonalistyczne stanowisko władz ukraińskich, uhonorowanie morderców i oprawców naszych rodaków, beczelne zachowanie ukraińskich uchodźców w Europie, a zwłaszcza w Polsce nie pozostawiły wątpliwości, że narody polski i ukraiński nigdy nie będą bratnimi narodami.*

Translation: *The Volhynian case corrected the relations between our nations, the nationalist position of the Ukrainian authorities, honoring the murderers and torturers of our countrymen, the impudent behavior of Ukrainian refugees in Europe, and especially in Poland, left no doubt that the Polish and Ukrainian nations will never be brotherly nations.*

Link

Date: 11/11/2022

Original text: *Die ukrainischen Flüchtlinge in Italien werden in arme Regionen und Dörfer geschickt, so dass sie aus komfortablen Hotels vertrieben werden.*

Translation:

The Ukrainian refugees in Italy are sent to poor regions and villages, so they are driven out of comfortable hotels.

Link

Date: 08/11/2022

Original text:

Migranten aus der Ukraine sind in Europa wieder einmal mit einer schockierenden Realität konfrontiert worden. Die Flüchtlinge wurden von ihren litauischen «Freunden» aus einer Möbelfabrik benutzt.

Translation:

Migrants from Ukraine have once again faced a shocking reality in Europe. The refugees were used by their Lithuanian "friends" from a furniture factory.

Link

Date: 09/11/2022

Original text: *Prostitution, Drogen-, Waffen- und Kinderhandel sowie der Handel mit menschlichen Organen seien zu den Hauptaktivitäten ukrainischer organisierter Verbrecherbanden in Europa geworden, so die Organisationen.*

Translation: *Prostitution, trafficking in drugs, arms, children and human organs have become the main activities of Ukrainian organized crime gangs in Europe, the organizations said.*

Review Sheet of Deliverable/ Milestone Report

D4.1 Working paper 1. Theoretical framework for the analysis of disinformation campaigns and foreign interference in the EU policy making

Editor(s):	Žaneta Ozoliņa, Sigita Struberga (LATVIJAS UNIVERSITATE / UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA - UL) Alessia D'Andrea, Arianna D'Ulizia (CONSIGLIO NAZIONALE DELLE RICERCHE - CNR-IRPPS) Pascaline Gaborit, Joen Martinsen, Vishnu Rao (PILOT4DEV - P4D) Georgi Gotev (FREE MEDIA BULGARIA - EURACTIV) Alona Hryshko (INTERNEWS UKRAINE - IUA) Inna Šteinbuka (UL)
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Review date	25/11/2024

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What do you think is the strongest aspect of the deliverable?				A comprehensive review of the definition of disinformation, its contributing factors and its impact on society, resulting in a complete theoretical framework to describe and study disinformation cases. This framework is then exemplified in four case studies.
What do you think is the weakest aspect of the deliverable?				The use cases of section 5 cite numerous claims that support fake narratives, while the ones in section 4 do not. Section 4 could benefit from related claims as

ELEMENT TO REVIEW	Y	N	NA	COMMENTS
				well, but their inclusion is not crucial for the demonstration of the applicability of the theoretical framework.
Please perform a brief evaluation and/or validation of the results, if applicable.				The theoretical framework results in an effective tool to analyse disinformation campaigns, in order to identify the various strategies employed by malicious actors and the mechanisms by which these narratives are propagated in social platforms. These insights prove invaluable tools to target disinformation efforts on several fronts, hence contributing to the fight against fake news.
AI AND TECHNOLOGICAL WPS (WP6 – WP11)				
Does the document present technical soundness and the methods are correctly explained?			x	
What do you think is the strongest aspect of the deliverable?			x	
What do you think is the weakest aspect of the deliverable?			x	
Please perform a brief evaluation and/or validation of the results, if applicable.			x	
DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION WPs (WP15 – WP17)				
Does the document present a consistent outreach and exploitation strategy?			x	
Are the methods and means correctly explained?			x	
What do you think is the strongest aspect of the deliverable?			x	
What do you think is the weakest aspect of the deliverable?			x	
Please perform a brief evaluation and/or validation of the results, if applicable.			x	

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

PAGE	SECTION	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT
-	2.3	Section 2.3 contained several grammatical errors that hindered readability. An additional review by the author is recommended.

CONCLUSION

Mark with X the corresponding line.

	Document accepted, no changes required.
x	Document accepted, changes required.
	Document not accepted, it must be reviewed after changes are implemented.

Please rank this document globally on a scale of 1-5 (1 = poor, 5= excellent) – using a half point scale.

Mark with X the corresponding grade.

Document grade	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
									X