



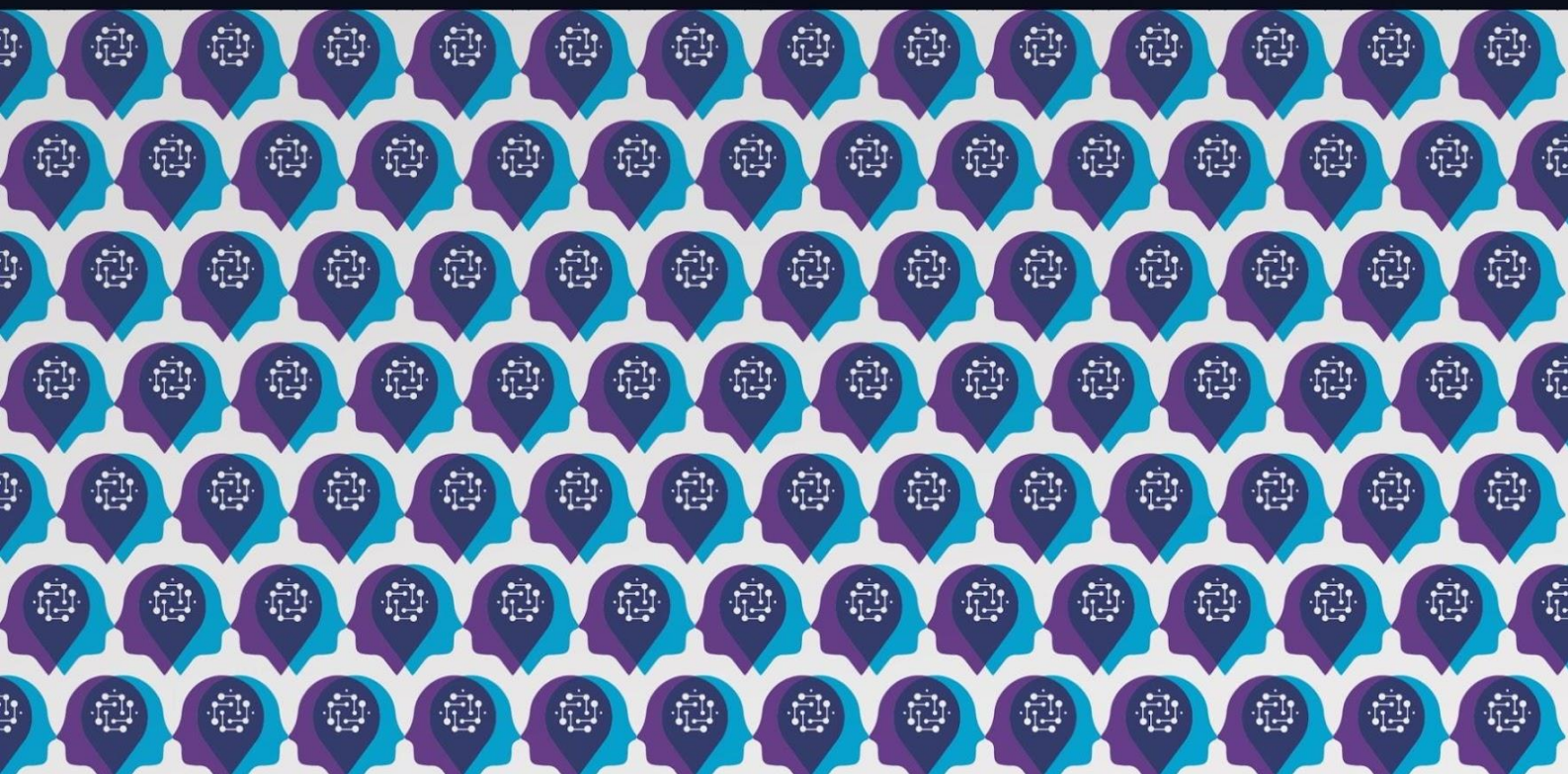
AI4Debunk

Milestone 1: A Holistic Understanding of the Two Case Studies—War in Ukraine and Climate Change

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Abstract	This milestone report provides a concise summary of the main findings from the analysis of disinformation narratives in two key areas: the war in Ukraine and climate change. Based on conclusions from desk reviews (WP12) and audience identification efforts (WP5), the report outlines the core disinformation narratives, target audiences, and methods of dissemination. Regarding the war in Ukraine, narratives include historical revisionism, neo-Nazi allegations, genocide claims, and accusations of weapon development—deployed to justify aggression and manipulate public perception. Climate change disinformation encompasses denial, media distrust, economic fearmongering, and greenwashing, primarily aimed at delaying policy implementation and protecting vested interests. Despite differences in

	objectives and timelines, both domains employ similar tactics such as emotional appeals, conspiracy theories, media manipulation, and the delegitimization of opponents. The report also emphasizes both overlapping and distinct target groups, including policymakers, journalists, the business community, diaspora populations, and vulnerable demographics such as the elderly, minorities, and rural communities.
Keywords	Climate change, critical discourse analysis, disinformation, polarizing narratives, war in Ukraine.

DOCUMENT DISSEMINATION LEVEL

Dissemination level	
X	PU – Public
	SEN - Sensitive

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0.4	00/06/2025	Project Coordinator Review	UL
1.0	00/06/2025	Final version ready for submission	UL

STATEMENT ON MAINSTREAMING GENDER

The AI4Debunk consortium is committed to integrating 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 – recognize 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 the inclusion, monitoring, and periodic evaluation of 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 on and

report on the limitations of their approach. Through an iterative learning process, they commit to planning and implementing strategies that maximize the inclusion of more and more intersectional perspectives in their activities.

DISCLAIMER

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3	PILOT4DEV	P4D	BE
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MILESTONE 1

A HOLISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE TWO CASE STUDIES: WAR IN UKRAINE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Verification: Complete identification of the target groups, their sources and their way of propagation

1 INTRODUCTION

Misinformation and disinformation are tools that influence public perception, erode trust, and obstruct meaningful action on issues ranging from geopolitical conflicts to global challenges such as climate change. This milestone synthesizes key narratives discussed in the desk review reports on two case studies – the war in Ukraine and climate change (WP12). It aims to explore main disinformation narratives and thematic overlaps, as well as to draw connections to the target groups, which have been identified by the team of the WP5.

2 THE WAR IN UKRAINE

DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES

1. **Historical Revisionism:** Denial of Ukraine's sovereignty; examples include claims by Putin about Ukrainian identity and territorial rights.
2. **Neo-Nazi Allegations:** Propagation of narratives framing Ukraine as a neo-Nazi state to justify military aggression.
3. **Genocide Claims:** Misuse of the term "genocide" to frame Ukraine as a threat to Russian speakers.
4. **Weapons of Mass Destruction:** Allegations of Ukraine developing nuclear and biological weapons.

AIMS

- Erosion of international consensus on Ukraine's sovereignty.
- Domestic narrative control within Russia to legitimize aggression.

3 CLIMATE CHANGE

DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES

1. **Denial and Downplaying:** Claims downplaying human contributions to climate change or denying its existence.

2. **Distrust in Media:** Accusations of media alarmism to discredit legitimate reporting on climate issues.
3. **Economic Fearmongering:** Exaggeration of costs related to renewable energy or climate policies.
4. **Greenwashing:** Misinformation by fossil fuel companies through sponsored content.

AIMS

- Delay in climate policy implementation.
- Public confusion over scientific consensus and policy goals.

4 SIMILARITIES

SHARED TECHNIQUES AND TACTICS

Disinformation campaigns related to the Ukraine war and climate change share several common strategies, reflecting the universality of manipulative narratives and their dissemination methods:

1. **Historical Revisionism and Narrative Framing:**
 - In the Ukraine war, Russia employs historical revisionism to claim that Ukraine lacks sovereignty, portraying it as a historically inseparable part of Russia. These narratives distort history to justify aggression, leveraging emotional connections to national identity.
 - In climate change disinformation, similar manipulations involve cherry-picking historical climate data to suggest that global warming is a natural phenomenon rather than a result of human activity. This tactic fosters scepticism about the urgency of action.
2. **Exploitation of Conspiracy Theories:**
 - Both domains see widespread use of conspiracy theories. In Ukraine, narratives like the "neo-Nazi" government and Western puppet claims serve to delegitimize Ukraine and its allies.
 - For climate change, conspiracies such as the "Great Reset" portray climate policies as tools for elite control, fostering mistrust in governance and scientific authorities.
3. **Weaponization of Media and Social Platforms:**
 - Social media is a primary channel for amplifying disinformation. Russian state-sponsored accounts spread falsehoods about Ukraine to international audiences, while algorithms favouring sensational content exacerbate the reach of these narratives.
 - Similarly, climate misinformation thrives on platforms where algorithms amplify polarizing content, allowing misleading memes, videos, and articles to gain disproportionate visibility.
4. **Leveraging Emotional Appeals:**
 - Both campaigns invoke fear and outrage to manipulate perceptions. In Ukraine, disinformation uses claims of genocide and nuclear threats to rally support domestically and internationally.
 - Climate disinformation focuses on economic fears and distrust, emphasizing supposed economic devastation from renewable energy adoption.
5. **Delegitimizing Opposition:**
 - Ukrainian leadership is framed as corrupt or fascist to undermine legitimacy.

- Climate activists are discredited as hypocritical elites to erode trust in environmental advocacy.

DIFFERENCES

Despite the similarities, the underlying goals and contexts of these disinformation campaigns exhibit notable differences:

1. Primary Motivations:

- The Ukraine war disinformation aims to justify military aggression, suppress dissent, and maintain geopolitical influence.
- Climate change disinformation seeks to delay policy implementation, protect vested fossil fuel interests, and undermine scientific consensus.

2. Target Audiences:

- Ukraine narratives focus on both domestic (Russian) and international audiences, aiming to shape global opinion and maintain internal cohesion in Russia.
- Climate misinformation primarily targets global citizens and policymakers, leveraging doubts to obstruct climate action.

3. Temporal Dimensions:

- Ukraine disinformation campaigns are highly event-driven, adapting quickly to developments in the conflict, such as battlefield outcomes or international sanctions.
- Climate disinformation, by contrast, unfolds more gradually, emphasizing long-term doubt about scientific integrity and policy feasibility.

4. Intensity of Propagation:

- The urgency of the Ukraine conflict results in real-time, high-volume propaganda production, often coordinated by state actors.
- Climate disinformation involves sustained campaigns by private interests, including fossil fuel companies and aligned political entities, using more subtle but persistent techniques.

5 INTERCONNECTED CHALLENGES

Both disinformation ecosystems overlap in their broader impacts:

- **Erosion of Trust:** Disinformation in both cases undermines trust in institutions, whether governments, media, or science, creating long-term scepticism.
- **Polarization:** These campaigns exacerbate societal divisions, making consensus-driven actions, such as international climate agreements or geopolitical coalitions, harder to achieve.
- **Undermining Accountability:** By sowing doubt and confusion, disinformation hinders the accountability of aggressors in Ukraine and polluters in the climate crisis.

6 TARGET AUDIENCE

In both cases disinformation is targeted at general public and particular groups. Identification of the primary target group is important for elaborating the most efficient debunking or pre-debunking strategies and tools.

According to the study carried out within the WP5 there are two groups, which can be categorized in more detailed sub-groups.

7 MOST EXPOSED TARGET AUDIENCE

1. **Policy makers on European and national level:** in cases of the war in Ukraine and climate change policy makers are targeted for the purpose to influence decision making process, to discredit European politicians as incompetent and to divide democratic political establishment.
2. **Journalists:** as public opinion makers and information disseminators they could be used as legitimisers of disinformation narratives, contributors to erosion of public trust and political agenda makers in favour of Russia's or China's interests.
3. **Business community:** in the case of the war in Ukraine, the business community can be leveraged as a lobbying force to oppose decisions on sanctions, arguing that such measures harm their profitability and long-term sustainability. In the case of climate change, businesses can be positioned as opponents of green policies, particularly the EU Green Deal and other decarbonization efforts. Disinformation can be used to manipulate public opinion and professional groups, spreading misleading narratives that climate policies lead to job losses, economic instability, and higher costs for consumers.
4. **Diaspora and refugees in Europe:** to create internal divisions among Russian opposition and Ukrainian diaspora, weaken support for Ukraine and encouraging them to support Moscow rather than integrate into European society, and manipulate public opinion.

8 MOST VULNERABLE TARGET AUDIENCE

1. **Age:** older adults are considered more susceptible to misinformation and disinformation, as well as younger people, especially those with extensive internet use.
2. **Minorities:** the most vulnerable to distorted information, in the sense that false stories and information is being spread about them. Ethnic, religious and sexual minorities, including Roma people, Jews, Muslims, and people of Asian descent, are primary targets of disinformation campaigns.
3. **Rural communities:** communities with less access to reliable information, are more susceptible to disinformation than their urban counterparts.
4. **Education:** groups with low level of media literacy education, cybersecurity skills and knowledge about the information security are more exposed to disinformation.

Review Sheet of Deliverable/ Milestone Report

Milestone 1

Editor(s):	Žaneta Ozoliņa
Responsible Partner:	University of Latvia
Status-Version:	Final version
Date:	22/08/2025
Distribution level (CO, PU):	<Deliverable type e.g. Restricted, Public etc.>
Reviewer (Name/Organization)	Dr. Jamal Nasir (University of Galway)
Review date	22/08/2025

Disclaimer: This assessment reflects only the author's views and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein"

Mark with X the corresponding column:

Y= yes	N= no	N = not applicable
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ELEMENT TO REVIEW	Y	N	NA	COMMENTS
FORMAT: Does the document ... ?				
...include editors, deliverable name, version number, dissemination level, date, and status?	Y			
...contain a license (in case of public deliverables)?			NA	
...include the names of contributors and reviewers?	Y			
...has a version table consistent with the document's revision?	Y			
... contain an updated table of contents?			NA	
... contain a list of figures consistent with the document's content?			NA	
... contain a list of tables consistent with the document's content?			NA	
... contain a list of terms and abbreviations?			NA	
... contain an Executive Summary?	Y			
... contain a Conclusions section?			NA	
... contain a List of References (Bibliography) in the adequate format, if relevant?			NA	
... use the fonts and sections defined in the official template?	Y			
... use correct spelling and grammar?	Y			

ELEMENT TO REVIEW	Y	N	NA	COMMENTS
... conform to length guidelines (50 pages maximum (plus Executive Summary and annexes)	Y			
... conform to guidelines regarding Annexes (inclusion of complementary information)	Y			
... present consistency along the whole document in terms of English quality/style? (to avoid accidental usage of copy&paste text)	Y			
About the content...				
Is the deliverable content correctly written?	Y			
Is the overall style of the deliverable correctly organized and presented in logical order?	Y			
Is the Executive Summary self-contained, following the guidelines and does it include the main conclusions of the document?	Y			
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Are the contents of the document treated with the required depth?	Y			
Does the document need additional sections to be considered complete?			NA	
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Have you noticed any text in the document that is not well referenced? (copy and paste of text/picture without including the reference in the reference list)			NA	
SOCIAL and TECHNICAL RESEARCH WPs (WP4, 5, 12, 13, 14)				
Is the deliverable sufficiently innovative?			NA	
Does the document present technical soundness and its methods are correctly explained?			NA	
What do you think is the strongest aspect of the deliverable?			NA	
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Please perform a brief evaluation and/or validation of the results, if applicable.			NA	

ELEMENT TO REVIEW	Y	N	NA	COMMENTS
AI AND TECHNOLOGICAL WPS (WP6 – WP11)				
Does the document present technical soundness and the methods are correctly explained?			NA	
What do you think is the strongest aspect of the deliverable?			NA	
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Please perform a brief evaluation and/or validation of the results, if applicable.			NA	
DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION WPs (WP15 – WP17)				
Does the document present a consistent outreach and exploitation strategy?	Y			
Are the methods and means correctly explained?	Y			
What do you think is the strongest aspect of the deliverable?				Informative and easy to follow content
What do you think is the weakest aspect of the deliverable?				None
Please perform a brief evaluation and/or validation of the results, if applicable.			NA	

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

PAGE	SECTION	SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT
		<i>ADD ROWS AS NECESSARY</i>

CONCLUSION

Mark with X the corresponding line.

X	Document accepted, no changes required.
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Please rank this document globally on a scale of 1-5 (1 = poor, 5= excellent) – using a half point scale.

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