



European Digital Media Observatory

DISINFORMATION IN JUNE EXPLOITS SOCCER AND VACATIONS TO HIT COVID-19 VACCINES

First report on disinformation of the EDMO fact-checking network

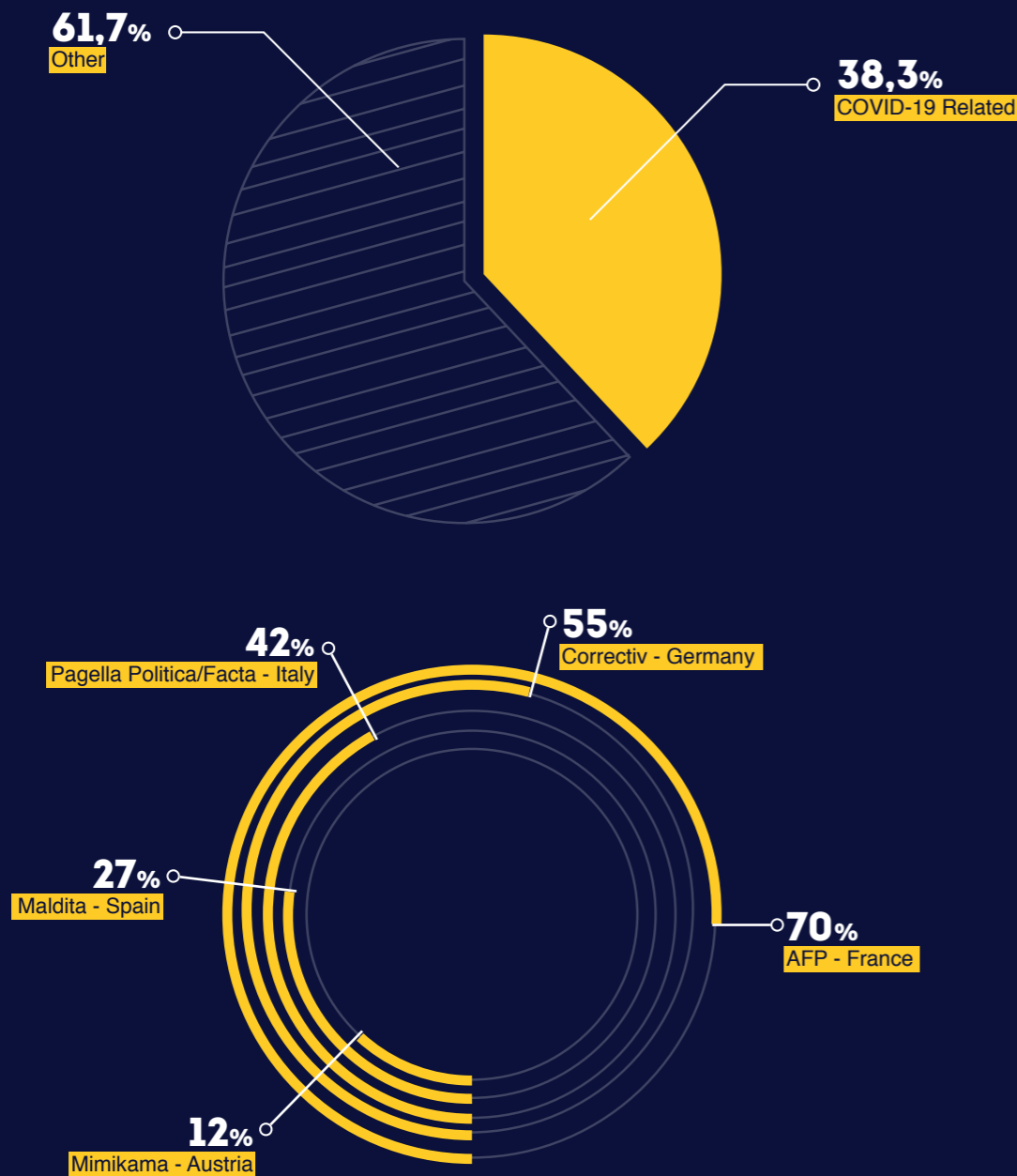
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ALMOST 40% OF THE ITEMS VERIFIED IN JUNE WERE COVID-19 RELATED

The 12 organizations* part of EDMO's fact-checking network contributing to this report published a total of 1.279 fact-checking articles in June 2021. Out of these articles 490 (38,3%) concerned COVID-19 related disinformation.

Still, significant variations exist among those organizations. For example, out of the total verification number, Mimikama (Austria) reported that 12% were COVID-19 related verification, a number that rises to 27% for Maldita (Spain), to 42% for PagellaPolitica/Facta (Italy), to 55% for Correctiv (Germany) and to 70% for AFP (France).

* Organizations that contributed to this report: AFP, Correctiv, Dpa, Ellinika Hoaxes, Knack Magazine, Maldita, Mimikama, Neutral, PagellaPolitica/Facta, The Journal Fact-Check, VerificaRTVE, Verificat.



THE MAIN CROSS-NATIONAL DISINFORMATION STORIES IN JUNE 2021 FOCUSED ON COVID-19, AND IN PARTICULAR ON VACCINES

In June 2021, a lot of disinformation in EU countries targeted COVID-19 vaccines, spreading false news about vaccines including: vaccines have killed huge numbers of people; vaccines are useless against the virus; they pose a danger to the receivers (eg. because they can change human Dna, or they contain graphene that “magnetizes” people, or the spike protein they use is toxic etc.).

In particular, the three false stories with the widest circulation in the EU, based on the reports by the EU fact-checkers, were:

- People vaccinated against COVID-19 should not or cannot take airplanes (or vaccinated pilots died or fell seriously ill because of the vaccine)
- People vaccinated against COVID-19 cannot donate blood
- ▲ Danish football player Christian Eriksen’s sudden illness was caused by the vaccine against COVID-19

Some of the verified false stories that circulated the most in the EU in June 2021 exploited popular topics like vacations (in particular air travel) or the UEFA European Football Championship to spread disinformation about vaccines.



OTHER CROSS-NATIONAL CASES OF DISINFORMATION DETECTED IN JUNE IN THE EU CONCERNED:



Anthony Fauci's leaked emails that prove that there is currently clear evidence that the Sars-Cov-2 virus has been engineered in a Chinese lab, or that face masks are ineffective, or that hydroxychloroquine works against the virus



COVID-19 vaccines causing more than 15.000 deaths in Europe according to European database of suspected adverse drug reaction reports



French virologist and Nobel Prize winner Luc Montagnier predicting that people vaccinated against COVID-19 will soon die



EU fact-checkers also witnessed the resurgence of some old hoaxes about the Sars-Cov-2 virus: that it is basically a flu or that it has been engineered in a Chinese laboratory (the scientific community believes that it is a remote possibility, but there is no strong evidence to support this theory as of today).

THE MOST INTERESTING VERIFIED DISINFORMATION STORIES AT NATIONAL LEVEL:

GERMANY

A disinformation campaign against the Green party spread by Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft, a neoliberal think tank and advocacy organization founded by the employers' organization Gesamtmetall

POLAND

Stories alleging that Roman Protasevich, a Belarusian activist and journalist arrested after the diverting of a Ryanair flight Athens-Vilnius, had ties with neo-Nazis

BULGARIA

Claims that the Bulgarian jet fighter that crashed in the Black Sea on June 9, 2021 was brought down by a US missile fired by mistake

ITALY

Claims that vaccinating young people against COVID-19 is useless because the vaccines do not stop the virus transmission

SPAIN

Claims that the majority of murderers of children are women and that 70% of filicides are committed by women



METHODOLOGY

The information contained in this report was collected through a questionnaire sent to the fact-checking organizations part of the **EDMO fact-checking network** (<https://edmo.eu/fact-checking-community/>).

Reference period: 1-30 June 2021.

Number of respondents: 12.

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