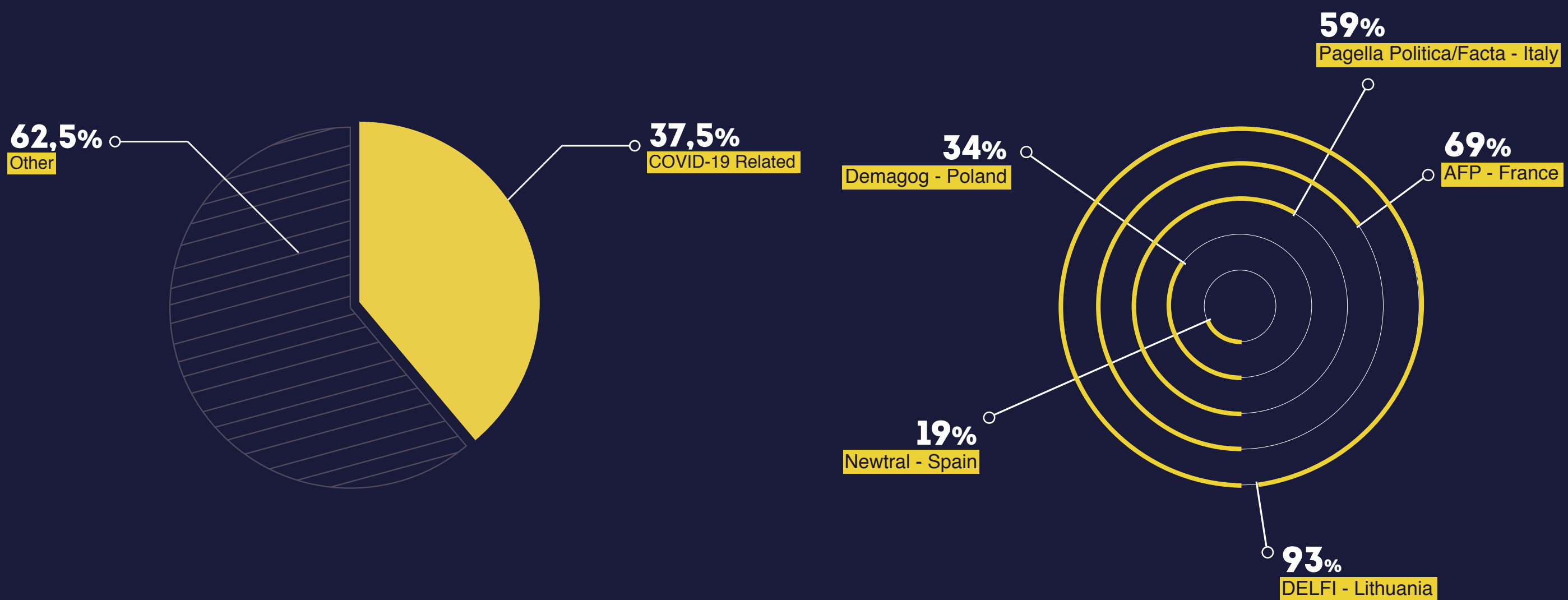




European Digital Media Observatory

IN A PARALLEL REALITY FUELLED BY DISINFORMATION, ANTI-VAXXERS ARE PORTRAYED TO BE WINNING

Monthly brief no. 4 – EDMO fact-checking network



MORE THAN ONE THIRD OF THE ITEMS VERIFIED IN SEPTEMBER WAS COVID-19 RELATED

The 12 organizations* part of the EDMO's fact-checking network that contributed to this brief published a total of 1,288 fact-checking articles in September 2021. Out of these articles 482 (37,5%) focused on COVID-19 related disinformation.

Significant variations exist among those organizations. For example, out of their total verifications, Newtral (Spain) reported that 19% were related to COVID-19, a number that rises to 34% for Demagog (Poland), 59% for PagellaPolitica/Facta (Italy), 69% for AFP (France) and 93% for Delfi (Lithuania).

** Organizations that contributed to this brief: AFP, Correctiv, Delfi, Demagog (Pl), Ellinika Hoaxes, France tv, Knack Magazine, Maldita, Newtral, PagellaPolitica/Facta, The Journal Fact-Check, VerificaRTVE*

IN SEPTEMBER, ANTI-VAXXERS NARRATIVES PERSIST IN DEVELOPING A PARALLEL REALITY

In September, according to the information gathered by the 12 organizations part of the EDMO's fact-checking network that contributed to this brief, narratives about COVID-19 vaccines are still the main source of transnational disinformation in the EU.

False news about vaccines being useless or dangerous, miraculous cures, huge demonstrations against corona-pass overlooked by mainstream media and alleged persecutions targeting anti-vaxxers are still widespread in many EU countries.

But a new trait in disinformation emerged particularly this month: false news about important victories that anti-vaxxers movements are achieving all around Europe.

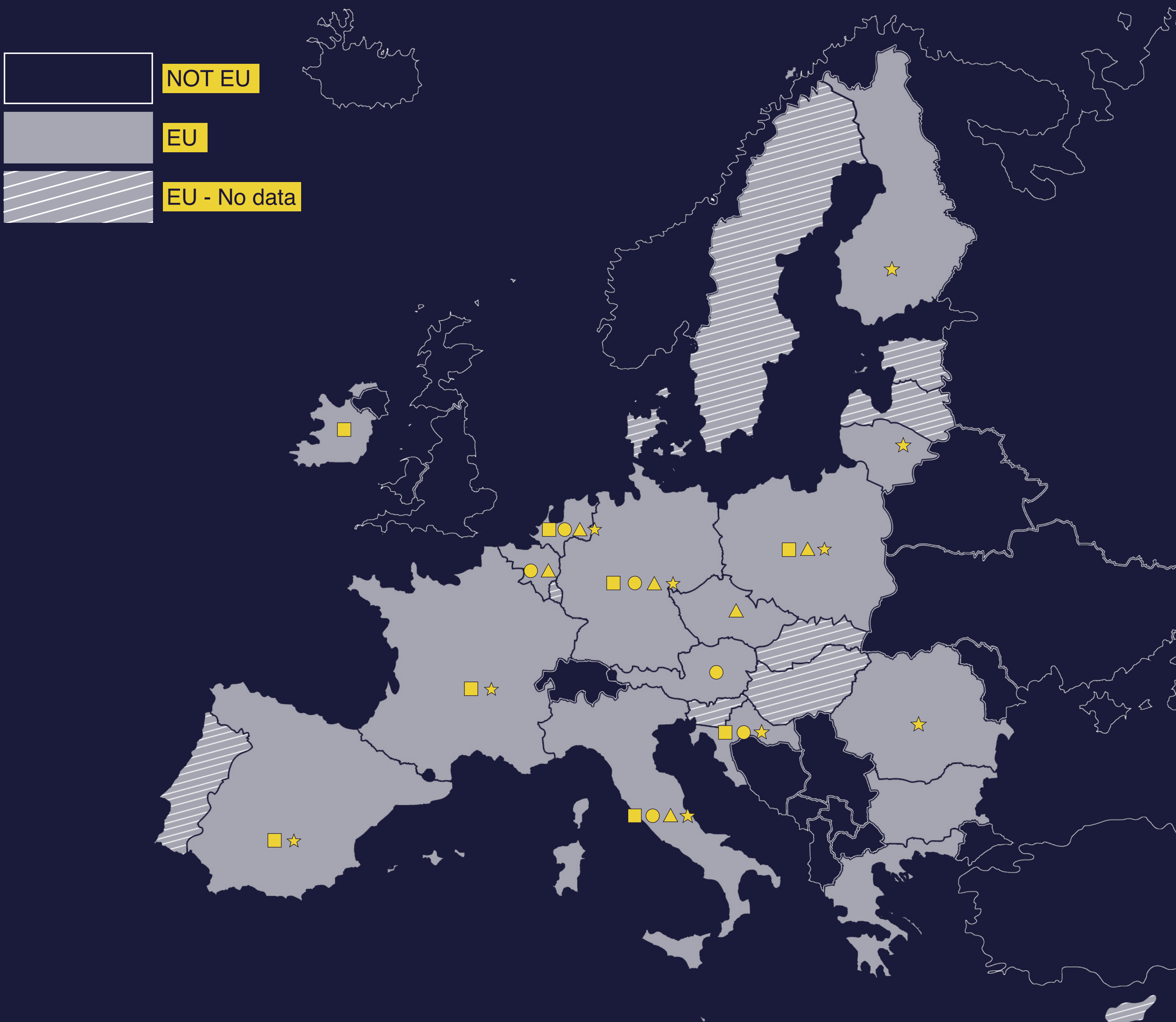


FALSE AND MISLEADING NEWS ABOUT ANTI-VAXXERS WINNING THEIR FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19 RELATED MEASURES:

- Mass protests against Covid-19 vaccination in Romania forced the government to close all its vaccination centers (detected in Spain and Croatia)
- Croatian President Zoran Milanović ordered an end to the Covid-19 vaccination programme (detected in Poland and Finland)
- Netherlands called off all pandemic measures, while in Italy the “green pass” has been cancelled after protests (both detected in Lithuania)
- Norway has reclassified Covid-19, establishing it is not more dangerous than the ordinary flu (detected in France and Italy)
- Restrictive measures and mandatory vaccination in Denmark were abolished following a backlash from the country’s lawyers (seen in Greece)
- Approval by the European Union of five “therapies” (including sometimes Ivermectin) against Covid-19 will make the vaccines obsolete and lead to their replacement (seen in France and Spain)

THE FOUR FALSE STORIES WITH THE WIDEST CIRCULATION IN THE EU IN SEPTEMBER, BASED ON THE REPORTS BY THE EU FACT-CHECKERS, WERE:

- Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine skipped some fundamental steps and used shortcuts in order to be approved quickly
- Photos and videos suggesting tens of thousands of truck drivers blocked traffic circulation in Italy in protest against the "Green pass"
- ▲ Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine contains high quantities of a poisonous chemical known as graphene oxide
- ★ Scientific studies demonstrate that Ivermectin is an effective medicine against COVID-19



THE MOST SIGNIFICANT VERIFIED DISINFORMATION STORIES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL:



SPAIN:

The eruption of the Cumbre Vieja volcano on La Palma has triggered the appearance of various misinformation stories connected to the event (false images, false tsunami alerts, false accusations to politicians and migrants)



GERMANY:

German elections triggered many false claims suggesting fraud (similarly to US elections in 2020) even if no actual evidence of irregularities was found



ROMANIA:

An image showing the Prime Minister of Luxembourg with his “wife”, a bearded man dressed in a long cream-white dress. Neither Xavier Bettel, who came out as gay in 2008, nor his husband, is in fact portrayed in the picture. The photo actually shows the Austrian singer Conchita Wurst and her business manager at the 2019 Vienna Opera Ball

METHODOLOGY

The information contained in this brief was collected via a questionnaire sent to the fact-checking organizations that are part of the EDMO fact-checking network

Reference period: 1-30 September 2021. Number of respondents: 12.
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