



European Digital Media Observatory

# **COVID-19 RELATED DISINFORMATION IS STILL STRONG, BUT SEEMS TO BE LOSING MOMENTUM**

Monthly brief no. 8 – EDMO fact-checking network

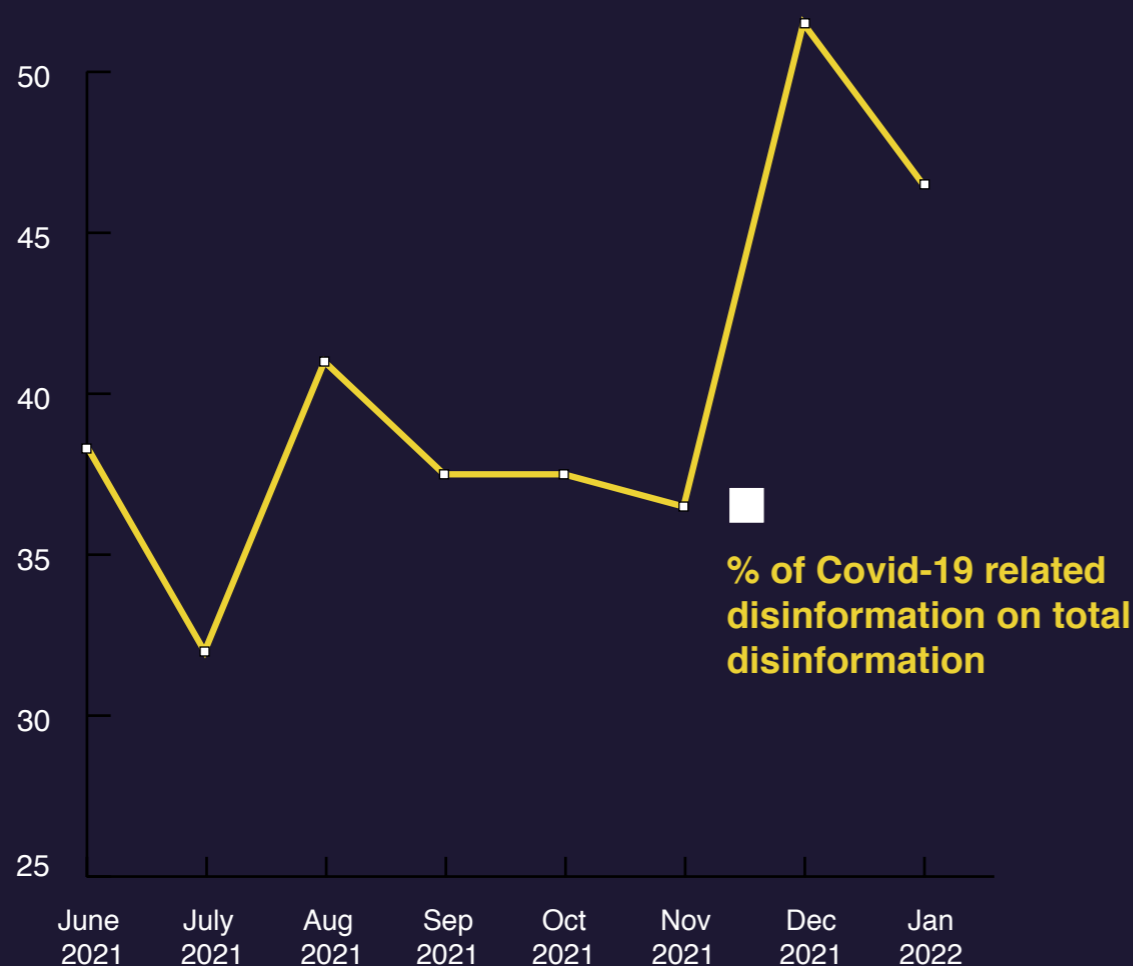
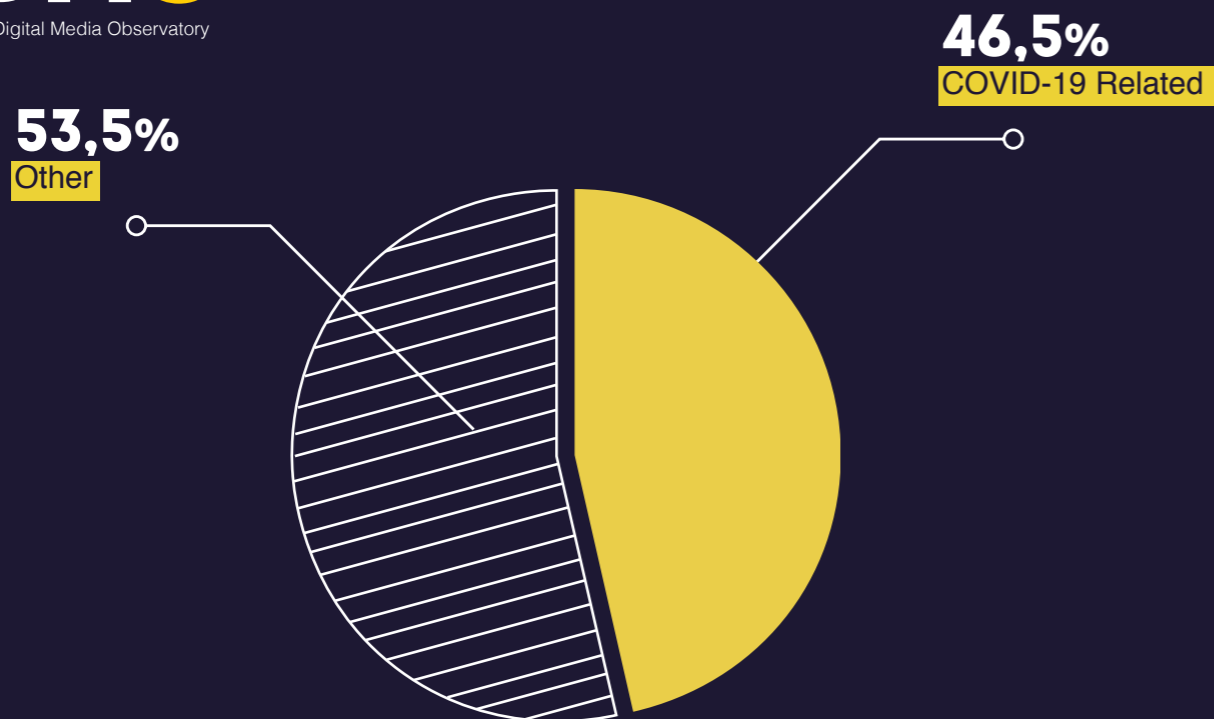
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## COVID-19 RELATED DISINFORMATION IS STILL STRONG IN JANUARY 2022

The 13 organizations\* part of the EDMO fact-checking network that contributed to this brief published a total of 1.025 fact-checking articles in January 2022. Out of these articles, 476 (46.5%) focused on COVID-19 related disinformation.

This percentage is the second highest ever recorded by these briefs, but lower than the one recorded the month before (51.5%). This decrease seems to be more related to some specific country-related situations (eg. Parliamentary elections in Portugal) than to a decline in the COVID-19 related disinformation. But it's noteworthy that there hasn't been an ulterior growth.

\* Organizations that contributed to this brief: AFP, Correctiv, Delfi, Demagog (PI), Ellinika Hoaxes, France Tv, Knack Magazine, Maldita, Ostro, PagellaPolitica/Facta, Poligrafo, The Journal Fact-Check, VerificaRTVE



## **SAME OLD NAMES, SAME OLD HOAXES**

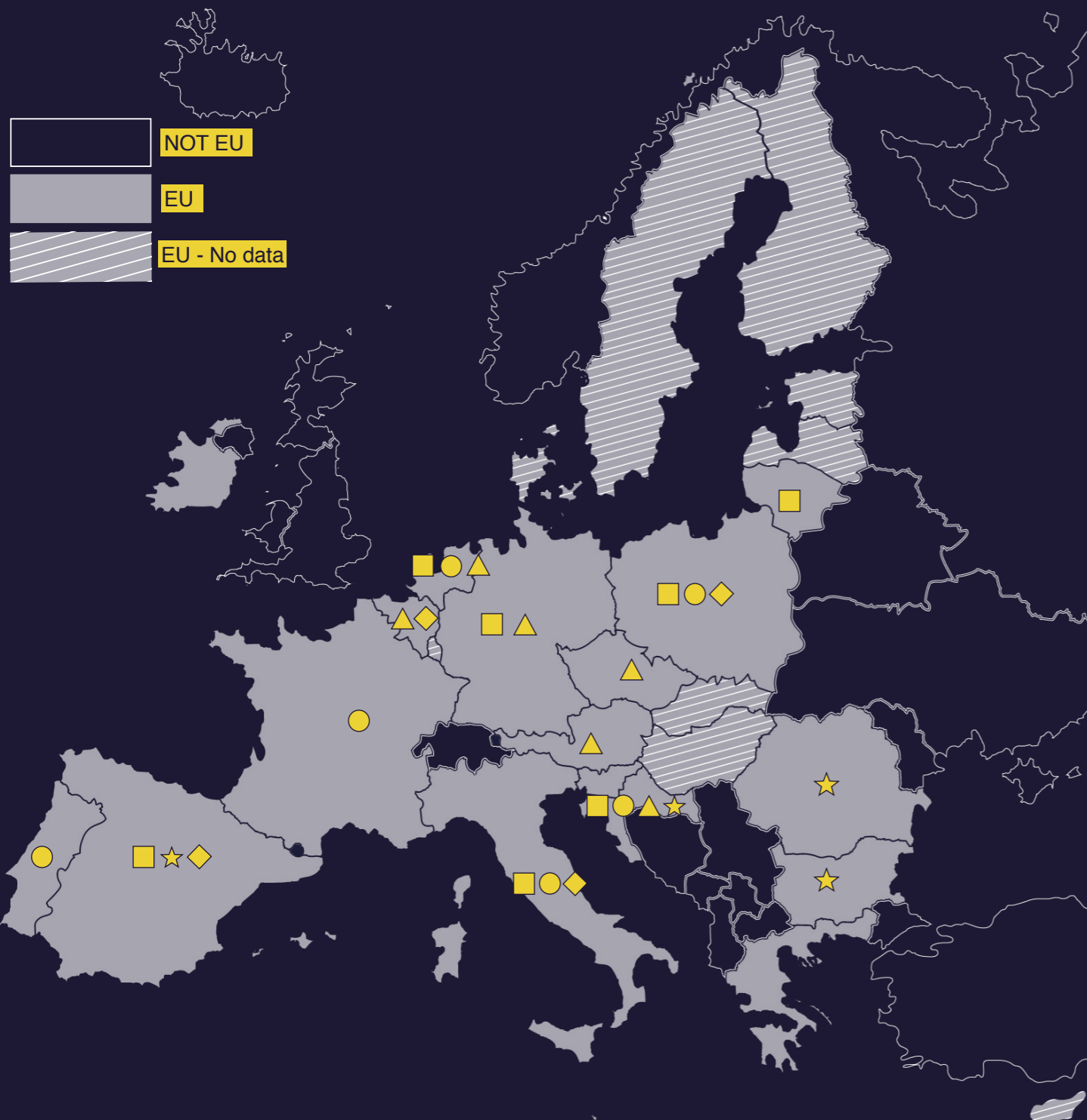
In January 2022, according to the information gathered by the 13 organizations part of EDMO fact-checking network who contributed to this brief, the COVID-19 related disinformation didn't evolve significantly.

The “heroes” of anti-vaxxers narrations this month are old acquaintances of disinformation: eg. the American scientist Robert Malone, the German lawyer Reiner Füllmich, the French professor Christian Perronne and the Thai-German microbiologist Sukarit Bakhdi.

The false stories circulating this month are similar to the ones already seen circulating previously:

- Face-masks cause a serious lack of oxygen and a concentration of CO2 that could lead to death
- Vaccines are ineffective: the majority of patients in ICU are vaccinated
- Vaccinated people are more susceptible for catching Omicron
- COVID-19 patients are actors paid to simulate the disease
- It is scientifically demonstrated that Ivermectin is effective against COVID-19
- There is an exponential rise in the number of myocarditis and pericarditis cases because of the COVID-19 vaccines

## THE FIVE FALSE STORIES WITH THE WIDEST CIRCULATION IN THE EU IN JANUARY, BASED ON THE EU FACT-CHECKERS REPORTS, WERE:



- Insurance companies deny compensation for the death of vaccinated people if they die because of the COVID-19 vaccine
- A video collage of 23 athletes collapsing because of the COVID-19 vaccine
- ▲ British authorities admitted that the COVID-19 vaccines have permanently damaged people's natural immune system
- ★ Antigen tests for Covid-19 are not reliable and it's demonstrated via a video showing a test giving a positive result for freshly squeezed orange juice
- ◆ Tennis players have dropped out of the Australian Open tournament due to health problems caused by the COVID-19 vaccination

## UKRAINE RELATED DISINFORMATION

Analyzing the information gathered by the 13 organizations part of EDMO fact-checking network that contributed to this brief, we detected the circulation of some false news about the situation in Ukraine, especially in Spain, Portugal, Poland and Romania. For example:

- Germany blocked flights of British planes with military equipment for Ukraine amid soaring tensions with Russia (seen in Poland)
- A BBC video warning of an imminent nuclear war (seen in Portugal)
- A video showing the Ukrainian military preparing for a war with Russia (seen in Spain)
- A video compilation of war images implying that the war between Russia and Ukraine had already started (seen in Spain)
- A video showing a convoy of US tanks in Romania (seen in Romania)

The size and the nature of this disinformation doesn't seem to be coherent with a state-sponsored operation. It looks mostly like click-baiting that exploits a hot topic in the news.

## THE MOST SIGNIFICANT VERIFIED DISINFORMATION STORIES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL:



**SPAIN:**

Poland, Sweden and Norway are filing a lawsuit against the WHO for infecting Europe: some pilots admitted that they have sprayed a chemical product



**POLAND:**

People who are fully vaccinated will have AIDS by the end of January



**IRELAND:**

Anyone who has ever had a cold is sufficiently protected against Covid-19 and doesn't need a vaccine

## **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: 1-31 January 2022. Number of respondents: 13.

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