

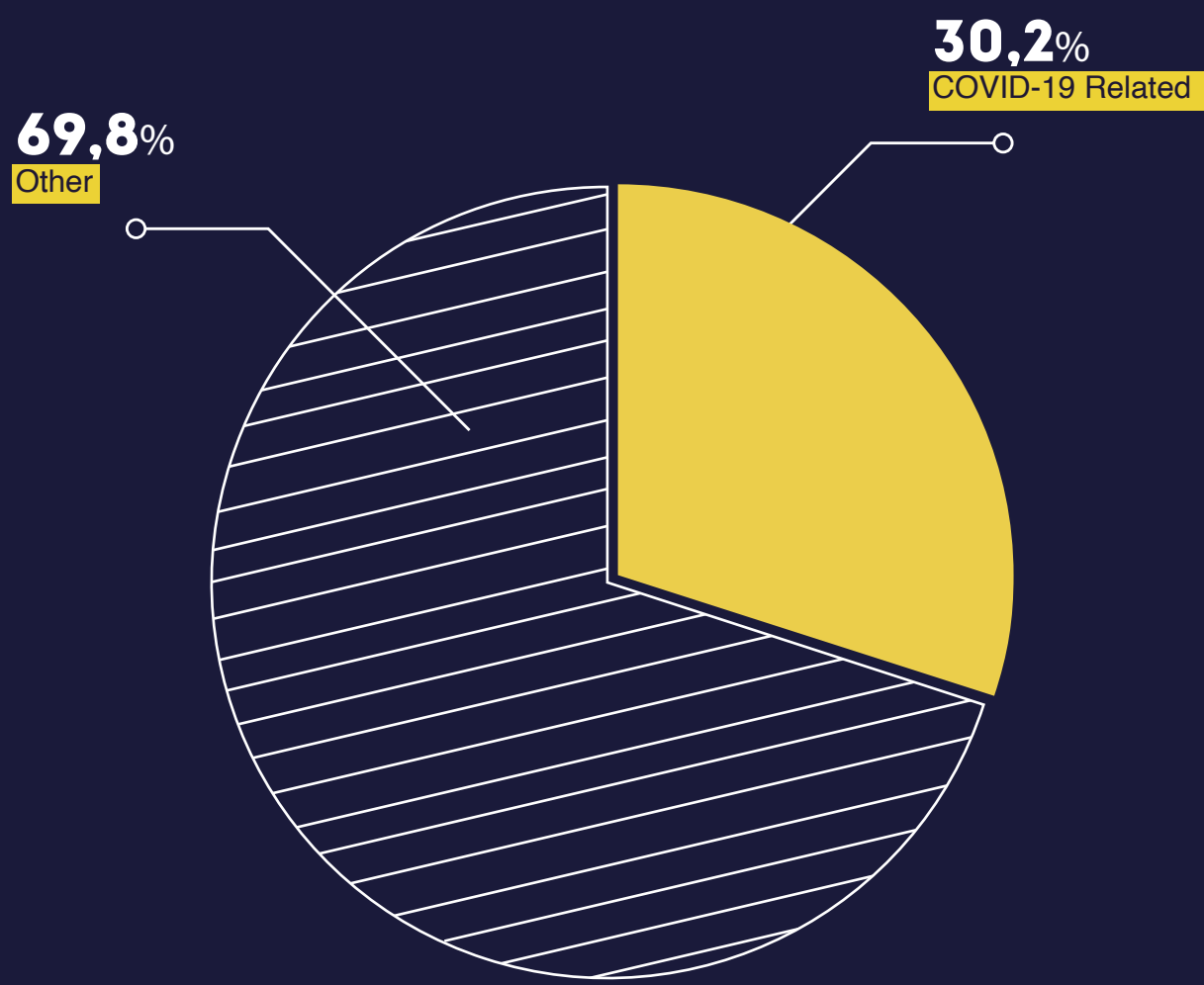


European Digital Media Observatory

# **COVID-19-RELATED DISINFORMATION FALLS TO ITS LOWEST, WHILE UKRAINE-RELATED ONE EXPLODED AT THE END OF FEBRUARY**

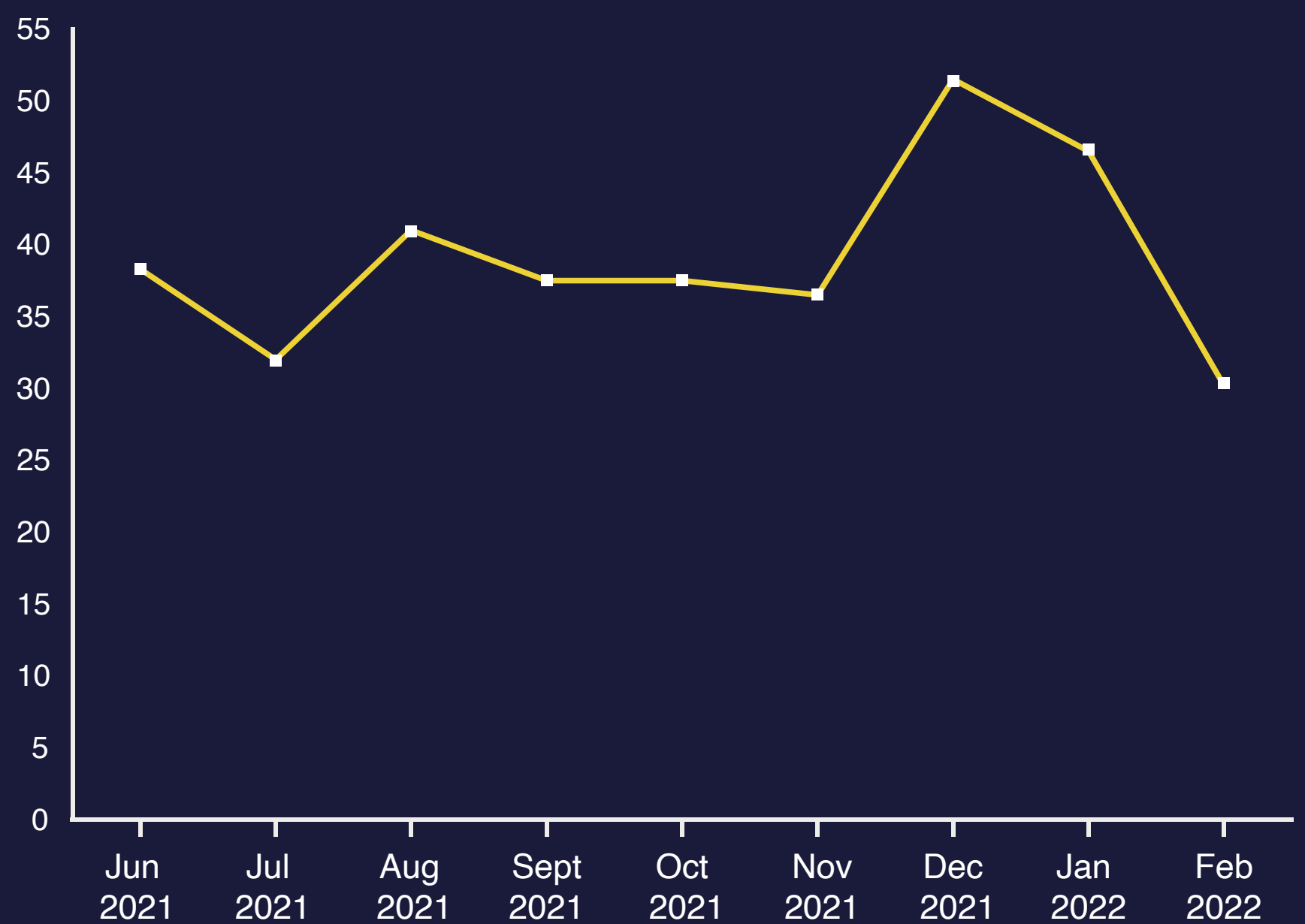
Monthly brief no. 9 – EDMO fact-checking network

## COVID-19 RELATED DISINFORMATION FALLS AT ITS LOWEST IN FEBRUARY 2022



The 13 organizations\* part of the EDMO fact-checking network that contributed to this brief published a total of 1.067 fact-checking articles in February 2022. Out of these articles, 322 (30.2%) focused on COVID-19 related disinformation.

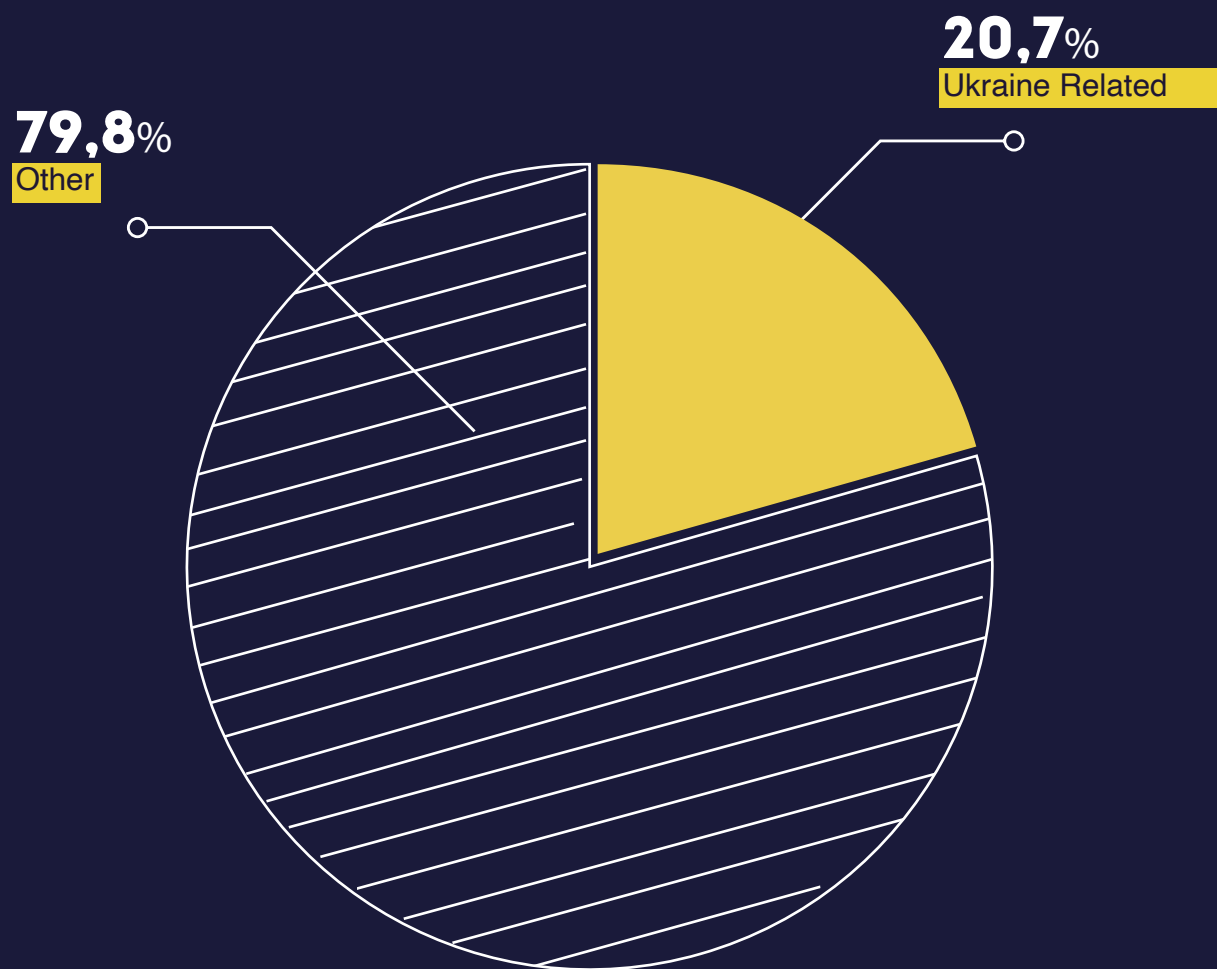
■ % of COVID-19 related disinformation on total disinformation



This percentage is the lowest ever recorded by these briefs. This decrease seems coherent with the fall in the number of cases across the EU and with the emerging, at the end of February, of a new main topic of information and disinformation.

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

## DISINFORMATION RELATED TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE EXPLODED AT THE END OF FEBRUARY 2022



Out of the 1.067 fact-checking articles published in February by the 13 organizations\* part of the EDMO fact-checking network that contributed to this brief, 221 (20.7%) focused on Ukraine-related disinformation.

The vast majority was published after the 24th of February. We expect that in March the Ukraine war-related disinformation will be predominant, surpassing the COVID-19-related disinformation.

During February, some organizations already had a higher percentage of articles dedicated to Ukraine war-related disinformation than to COVID-19-related disinformation:

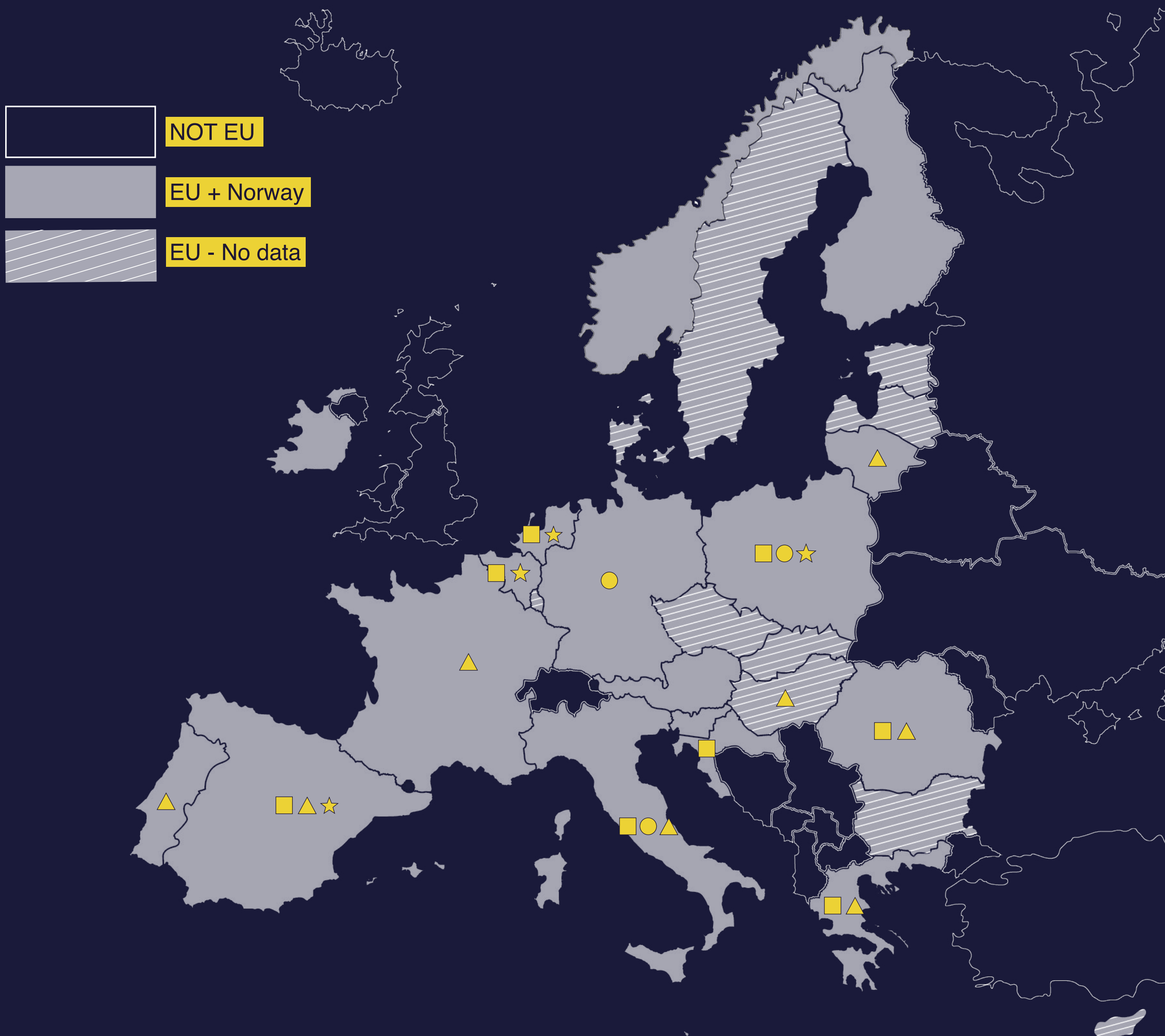
ORGANISATION/-COUNTRY	% COVID-19 RELATED DISINFO	% UKRAINE WAR RELATED DISINFO
Demagog/Poland	22	25
Maldita/Spain	17	22
Poligrafo/Portugal	9	14

It's worth noticing that Poland, Spain and Portugal are also the countries - together with Romania - where we detected the circulation of some disinformation about the situation in Ukraine (*see the previous brief*) already in January.

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

- Austrian Tv broadcasted images of false corpses (alive actors) to justify COVID-19 related restrictions\*
- In the first day of war (February 24) Russia did not attack civilian targets
- ▲ Videogames' images and video used to portray Russian operations in Ukrainian skies
- ★ Videos of truck convoys spread as alleged demonstrations by truckers in different EU countries against COVID-19 related restrictions, similar to the Canadian "Freedom convoy"

*\*The same false content has been used at the end of February to fuel the conspiracy theory that there is not a war in Ukraine and the victims showed by mainstream media are actors*



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



 **LITHUANIA:**

False claim that the Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gabrielius Landsbergis, called publicly to start the invasion of Russia.



 **GERMANY**  
 **FRANCE:**

False news about a supposed treatment with Ivermectin of Queen Elisabeth II, who contracted COVID-19.



 **FINLAND:**

It was claimed that bags with the word “Omikron” on them contained a bacterium sprayed from planes on people (the bags were actually produced by an Italian company manufacturing plastic granules).

## **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: 1-28 February 2022. Number of respondents: 13.

Main editor of this brief: Tommaso Canetta, Pagella Politica/Facta.

For further information: [\*t.canetta@pagellapolitica.it\*](mailto:t.canetta@pagellapolitica.it).



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