



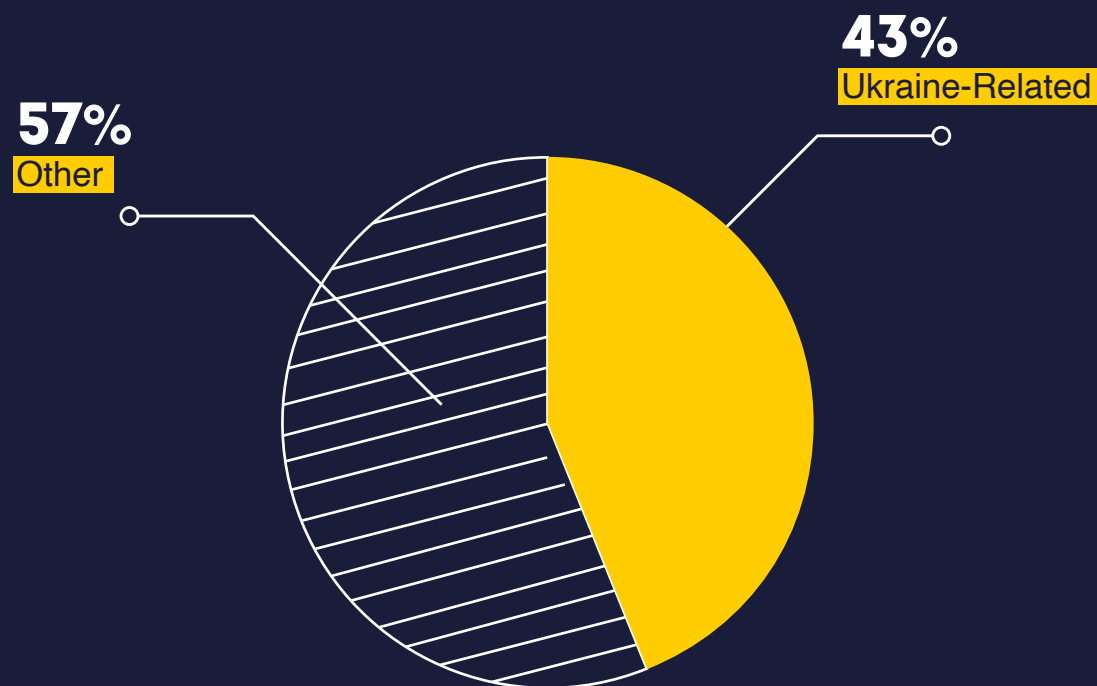
European Digital Media Observatory

TARGETS OF UKRAINE-RELATED DISINFORMATION BECOME CLEARER IN APRIL

Monthly brief no. 11 – EDMO fact-checking network

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UKRAINE-RELATED DETECTED DISINFORMATION SLOWS DOWN IN APRIL, BUT ITS SHARE IS STILL AMONG THE HIGHEST EVER MEASURED



The 25 organizations* part of the EDMO fact-checking network that contributed to this brief published a total of 1.337 fact-checking articles in April 2022. Out of these articles, 580 (43%) focused on Ukraine-related disinformation.

This percentage is lower than the previous month (59%), but it's still one of the highest percentages of disinformation about one single topic ever detected in these briefs.

The percentage's drop is most likely due to many factors: a slowing down of the Russian offensive on the ground in April, the fading of the shock-effect registered in March, and relevant local events (e.g. the elections in France or in Slovenia).

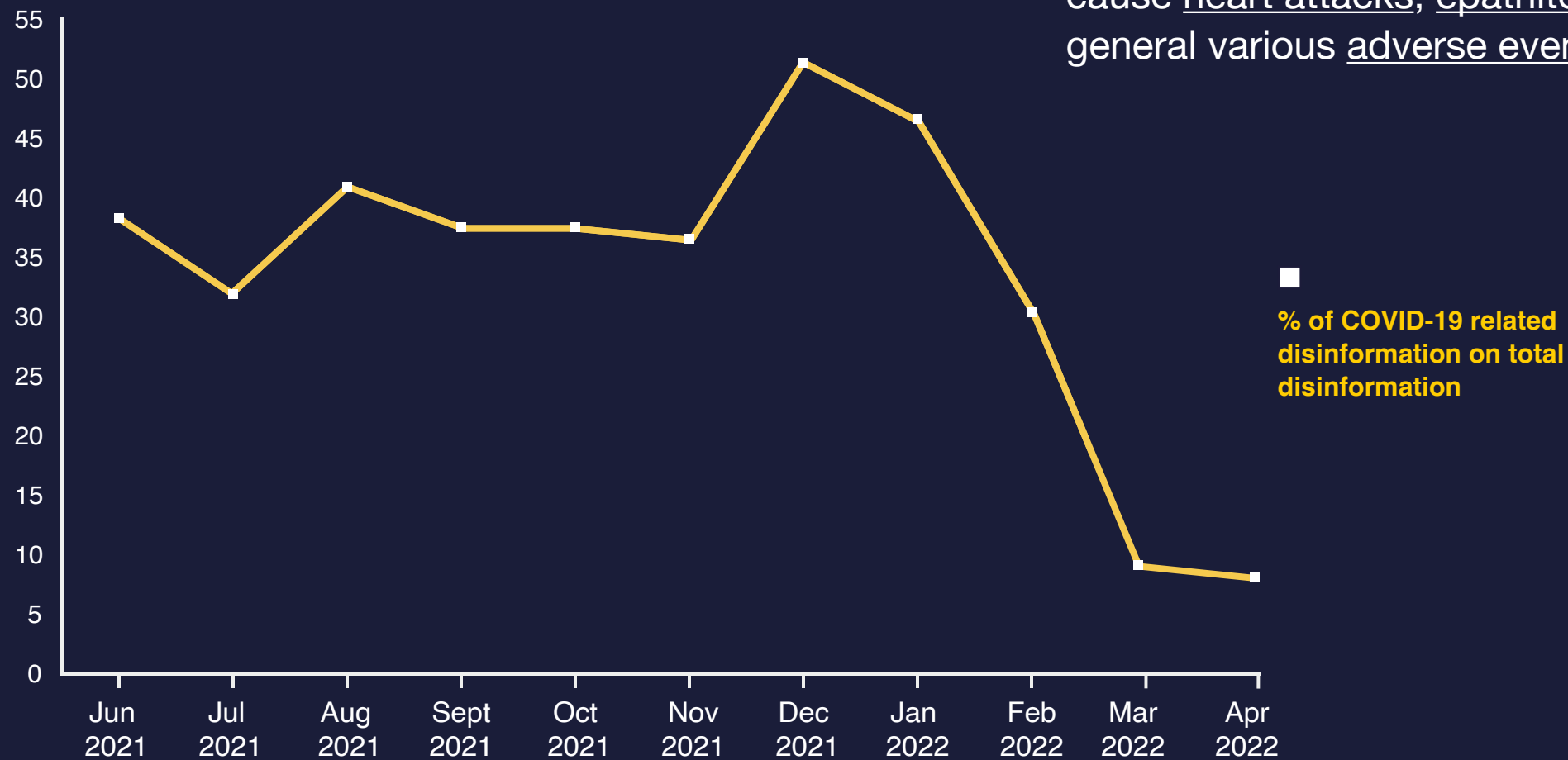
** Organizations that contributed to this brief: AFP, Correctiv, Delfi, Demagog (PI), Eesti Päevaleht, EFE Verifica, Ellinika Hoaxes, Eurocomunicare, Faktisk, Factcheck Vlaanderen, Källkritikbyrån, Knack Magazine, Les Surligneurs, Maldita, Mimikama, Nieuwscheckers, Newtral, Ostro, PagellaPolitica/Facta, Polìgrafo, Re:Baltica, The Journal Fact-Check, TjekDet, Verificat, VerificaRTVE*

*Both the number of organizations that contributed to this brief (25), and the number of countries covered (26), are new records, beating the ones set in the previous month. Considering that the two missing countries – Malta and Cyprus – are likely covered mostly by fact-checking articles in other EU languages (Greek, English, etc.), we can say that **this EDMO brief fully covers all the European Union.***

COVID-19 RELATED DETECTED DISINFORMATION IN APRIL STAYS AT THE SAME LEVEL LIKE IN MARCH

Out of the 1.337 fact-checking articles published in March by the 25 organizations* part of the EDMO fact-checking network that contributed to this brief, 107 (8%) focused on COVID-19-related disinformation. The percentage is similar to the one monitored in March (9%).

The main narrative is an already detected one, i.e. that vaccines are very dangerous: they supposedly cause heart attacks, epathites, AIDS and in general various adverse events.



IN APRIL OTHER 'TRADITIONAL' TARGETS OF DISINFORMATION WERE HIT IN MANY EU COUNTRIES:

- Migrants/Foreigners (not specifically from Ukraine) (e.g.)  
- EU Policies/Decisions (e.g.)  
- Electric vehicles (e.g.)    
- Gender equality policies (e.g.)   

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



- The horrific scenes recorded in Bucha were staged by Ukrainian forces (e.g.)
- Videos/images/news that demonstrate Zelensky's use of cocaine (e.g.)
- ▲ The model of the missile that hit Kramatorsk demonstrates Ukraine's responsibility (e.g.)
- ★ Evidence for electoral fraud in France (e.g.)

SEVEN NARRATIVES EMERGE AS THE MOST VIRAL AND PERSISTENT IN DETECTED DISINFORMATION

The previous brief listed nine main disinformation narratives about the war in Ukraine spread in Europe in March. In April, out of those nine, seven narratives emerged as the most viral and persistent, with few changes:

- Russian invasion of Ukraine is actually justified – a widespread twist detected in April is that the conflict is a “proxy war” and Russia is defending itself from NATO aggression (e.g.)
- Volodymyr Zelensky is a Nazi, a satanist, a drug addict, a coward, etc. (e.g.)
- Ukrainians and Ukrainian forces are largely Nazi (e.g.)
- Pro-Russia war propaganda (e.g.) and pro-Ukraine war propaganda (e.g.)
- Western traditional media spread false news/false images about the war (e.g.)
- Ukrainian refugees are violent, fascists, thieves etc. This narrative was detected as particularly viral in Latvia (e.g.), Estonia (e.g.), Bulgaria (e.g.), Poland (e.g.) and the Czech Republic (e.g.)
- Exaggerated negative economical consequences of the war and of the sanctions in Europe (e.g.)

These narratives are supported by many false news widely spread all across Europe, as detected also in recent EDMO’s Weekly Insights on Ukraine-related disinformation.

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT VERIFIED DISINFORMATION STORIES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL:



CROATIA:

The financial help offered by the Ukrainian government to citizens affected by the war is conditioned to them being vaccinated against Covid-19



SPAIN

The Russian government has announced an arrest warrant for billionaire George Soros for being the main promoter of the conflict in Ukraine



GERMANY:

LNG carriers use more oil on their way from the US to Europe than all cars of the world combined in a year



SWEDEN:

A Forbes list of the most dangerous countries for women travelers put Sweden second only to South Africa

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 April 2022 Number of respondents: 25.
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