



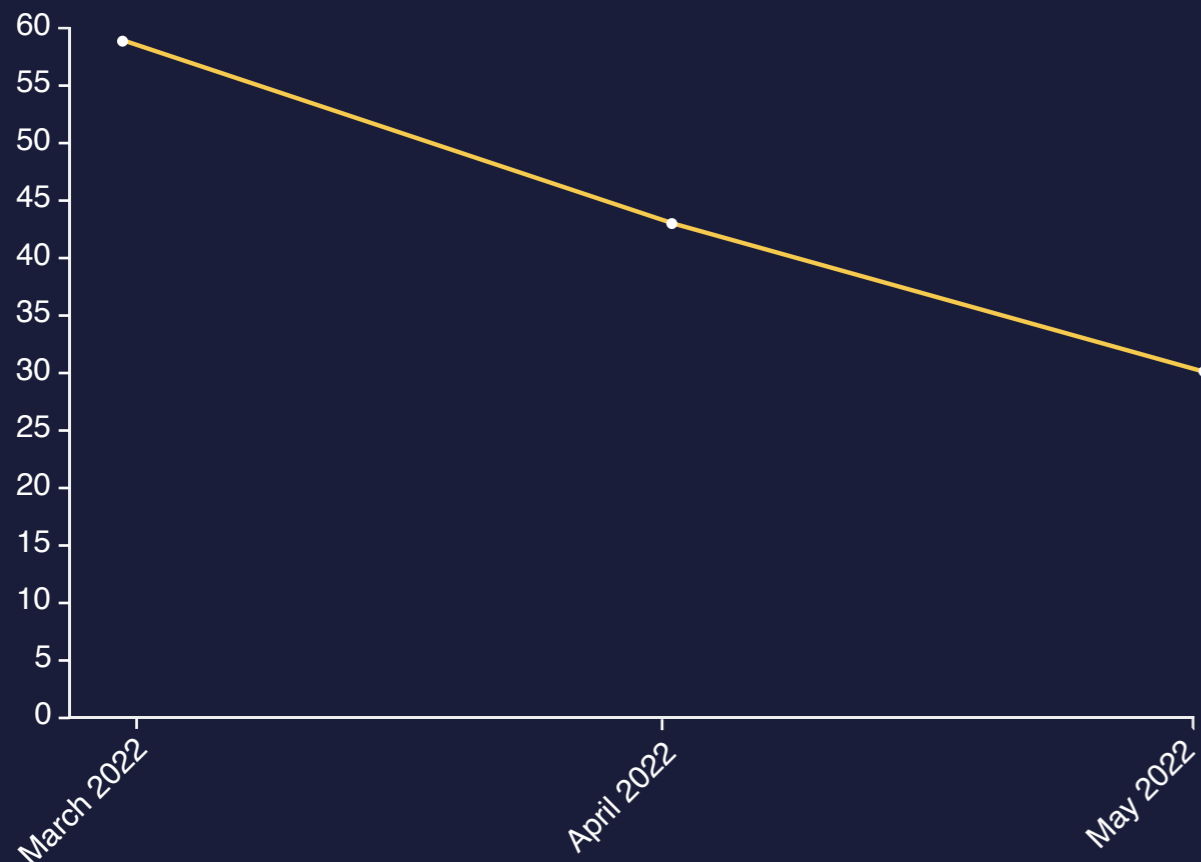
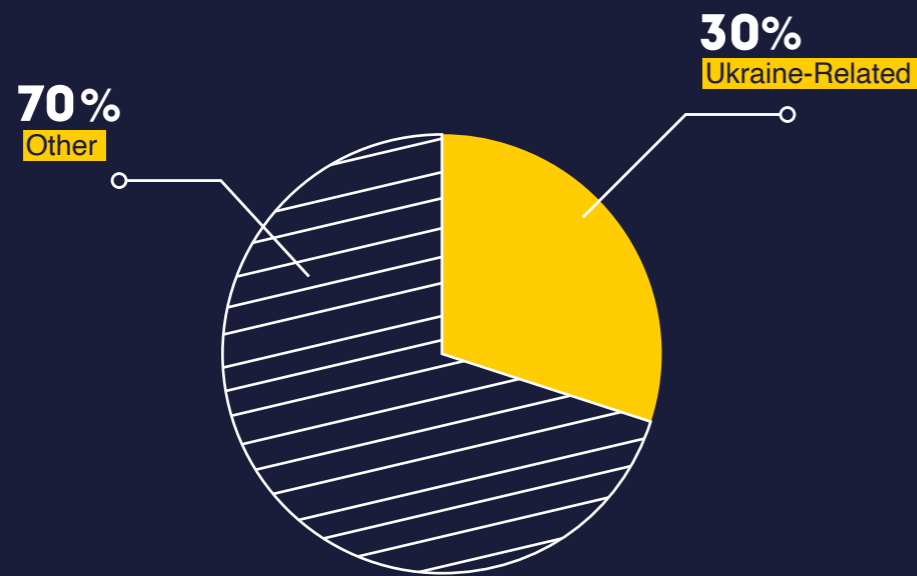
European Digital Media Observatory

# **UKRAINE-RELATED DISINFORMATION DROPS IN MAY, WHILE HEALTH-RELATED DISINFORMATION IS ON THE RISE**

Monthly brief no. 12 – EDMO fact-checking network

Published on 16 June 2022

## DETECTED DISINFORMATION RELATED TO UKRAINE SIGNIFICANTLY DECLINES IN EUROPE



The 25 organizations\* part of the EDMO fact-checking network that contributed to this brief published a total of 1.415 fact-checking articles in May 2022. Out of these articles, 430 (30%) focused on Ukraine-related disinformation.

After the record in March (59%), and the lower but still relevant share in April (43%), the percentage in May is a significant drop: when the main topic of disinformation was the pandemic, these briefs never recorded such a drastic decline, not until a new main topic of disinformation arised (namely, the war in Ukraine itself).

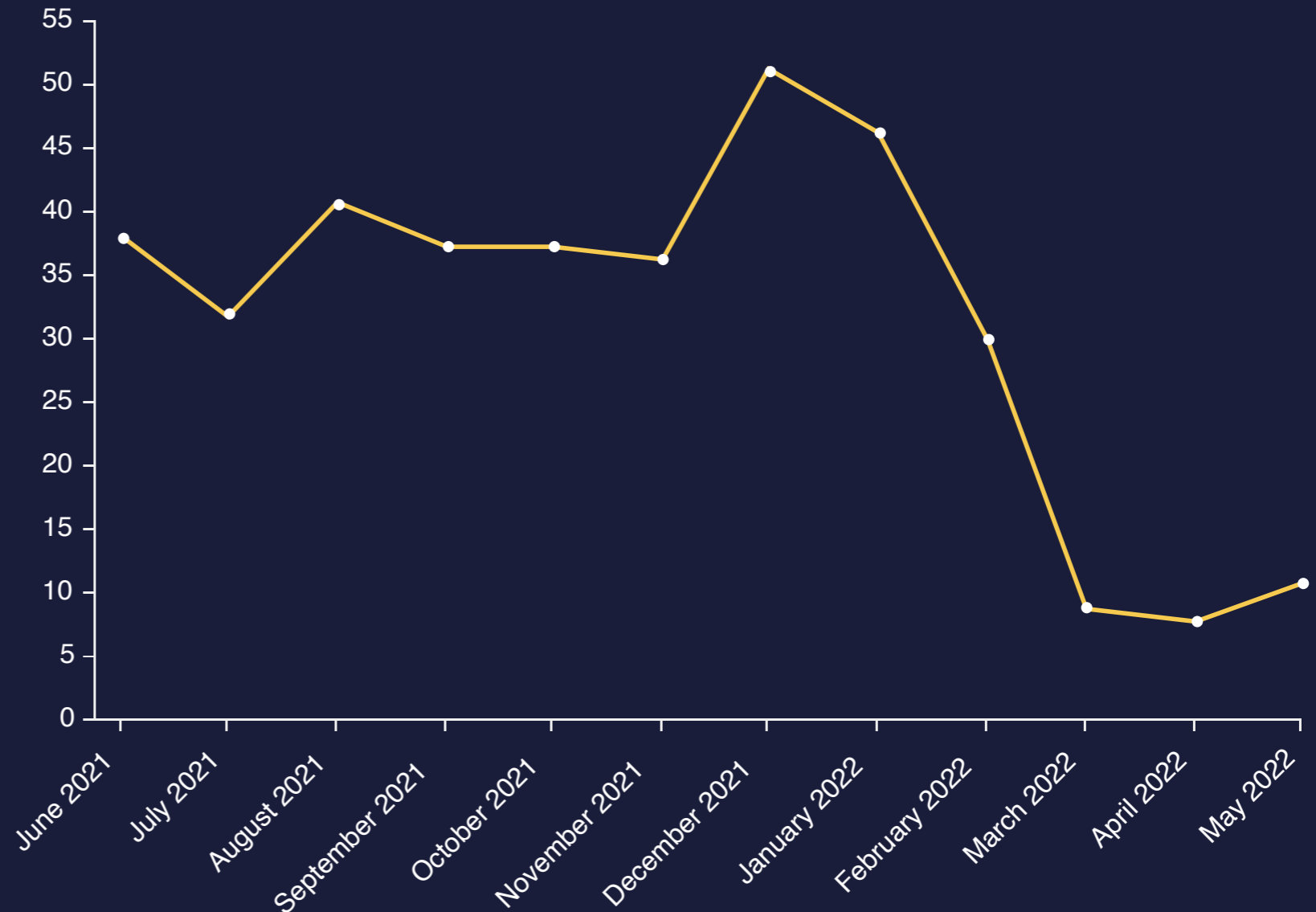
This drop can be interpreted as a sign that the attention in the European media and public opinion towards the situation in Ukraine is progressively diminishing.

\* Organizations that contributed to this brief: 15Min, AFP, Correctiv, Delfi, Demagog (PI), Eesti Päevaleht, EFE Verifica, Ellinika Hoaxes, Eurocomunicare, Faktisk, Factcheck Vlaanderen, France tv, Knack Magazine, Lakmusz, Les Surligneurs, Maldita, Nieuwscheckers, Newtral, PagellaPolitica/Facta, Poligrafo, Re: Baltica, The Journal Fact-Check, TjekDet, Verificat, VerificaRTVE

## COVID-19-RELATED DETECTED DISINFORMATION IN MAY SLIGHTLY INCREASES

Out of the 1.415 fact-checking articles published in May by the 25 organizations\* part of the EDMO fact-checking network that contributed to this brief, 156 (11%) focused on COVID-19-related disinformation. The percentage is slightly higher than the ones recorded in the first two months of the war in Ukraine.

■ % of COVID-19 related disinformation on total disinformation



## IN MAY, OTHER HEALTH-RELATED TOPICS BECAME ALSO TARGETS OF DISINFORMATION



Monkeypox-related disinformation has been detected as massive spread all across Europe: relating it to COVID-19 (e.g. “Monkeypox is caused by the COVID-19 vaccines”), in the context of conspiracy theories (e.g.), in order to attack LGBTQ+ communities (e.g.), to promote miraculous medicines (e.g.), to attack Bill Gates (e.g.) and others.



The World Health Organization (WHO) was the target of disinformation in many European countries in the frame of conspiracy theories (e.g.) and, especially in Eastern European (e.g.) countries and in Denmark (e.g.), for an alleged attempt to deprive the States of their sovereignty in case of future pandemics.

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



- Finland is moving military equipment to its Eastern border with Russia (e.g.)
- Hitler had Jewish origins (Lavrov's claim) (e.g.)
- ▲ The Ukrainian group Kalush Orchestra made the Nazi salute at the Eurovision song contest (e.g.)
- ★ The massacre in Uvalde, Texas, was carried out by a transgender woman (e.g.)
- ◆ Bill Gates foresaw a pandemic of monkeypox virus (e.g.)

The false stories about electoral fraud in France, detected in the previous brief covering April 2022, have been circulating also in May in at least 10 European countries: Poland, Belgium, Portugal, Croatia, Greece, Germany, Austria, Romania, Finland, Netherlands.

## **UKRAINE-RELATED DISINFORMATION DETECTED IN EUROPE FOCUSES MOSTLY ON UKRAINIAN REFUGEES**

Despite the decrease in the volume of Ukraine related disinformation, the narratives identified in the previous briefs continue to circulate in Europe. In May one primary target emerged: Ukrainian refugees.

This narrative has two main sub-narratives:


- Ukrainian refugees are violent (e.g.), spoiled (e.g.) and fascists (e.g.)
- Ukrainian refugees receive preferential treatment (e.g.)


Inverting the perspective, there is a narrative – less widespread than the previous one – that exploits Ukrainian refugees to attack European nations and governments, accused of mistreating Ukrainians (e.g.) or discriminating against them (e.g.).


- Other widespread false news about the situation in Ukraine were about the presence (and capture) of U.S. officials on the ground (e.g.), about Zelensky's drug addiction (e.g.), Bucha's massacre being staged (e.g.) and Nazi-sympathies of Ukraine's allies (e.g.).


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



 The President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen will abolish the right of veto in the defense field

 SS General Fritz von Scholz is the grandfather of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz

 A single eruption of the Etna volcano in Sicily put more than 10,000 times the CO2 into the atmosphere than mankind has produced in its entire time on Earth

 European Union banned crown symbols from featuring on beer glasses in Britain

## **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 May 2022 Number of respondents: 25.  
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EDMO has received funding  
from the European Union  
under Contract number: “LC-01464044”