

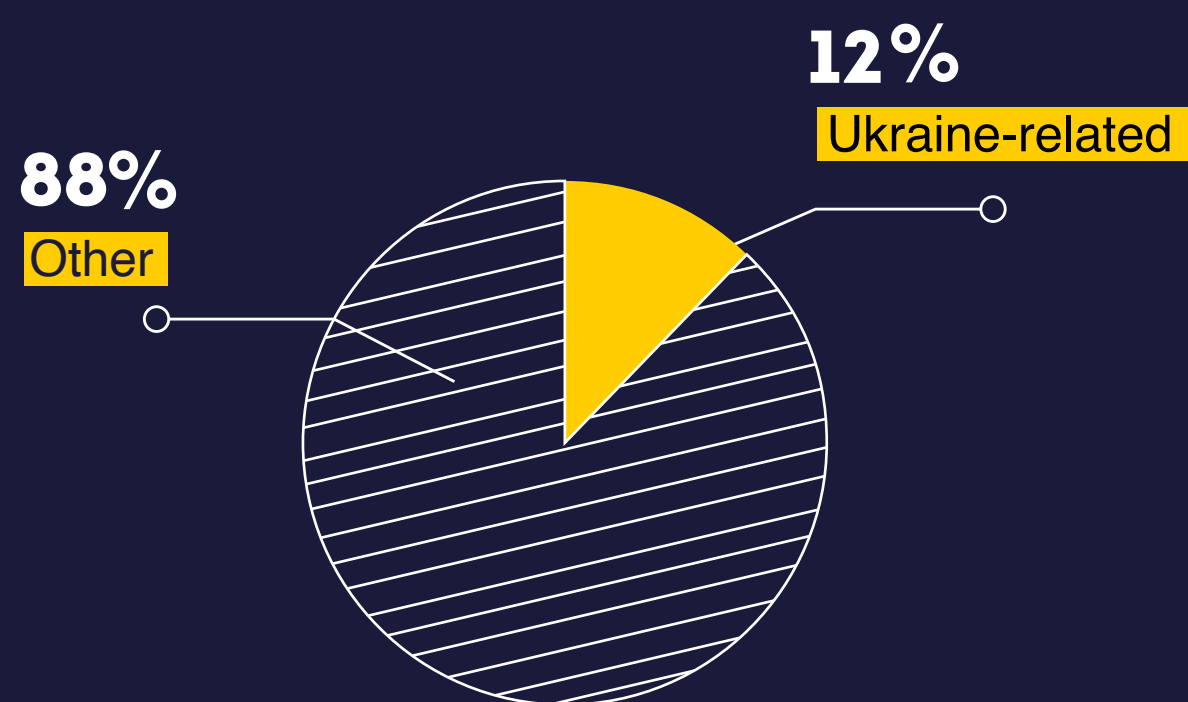


European Digital Media Observatory

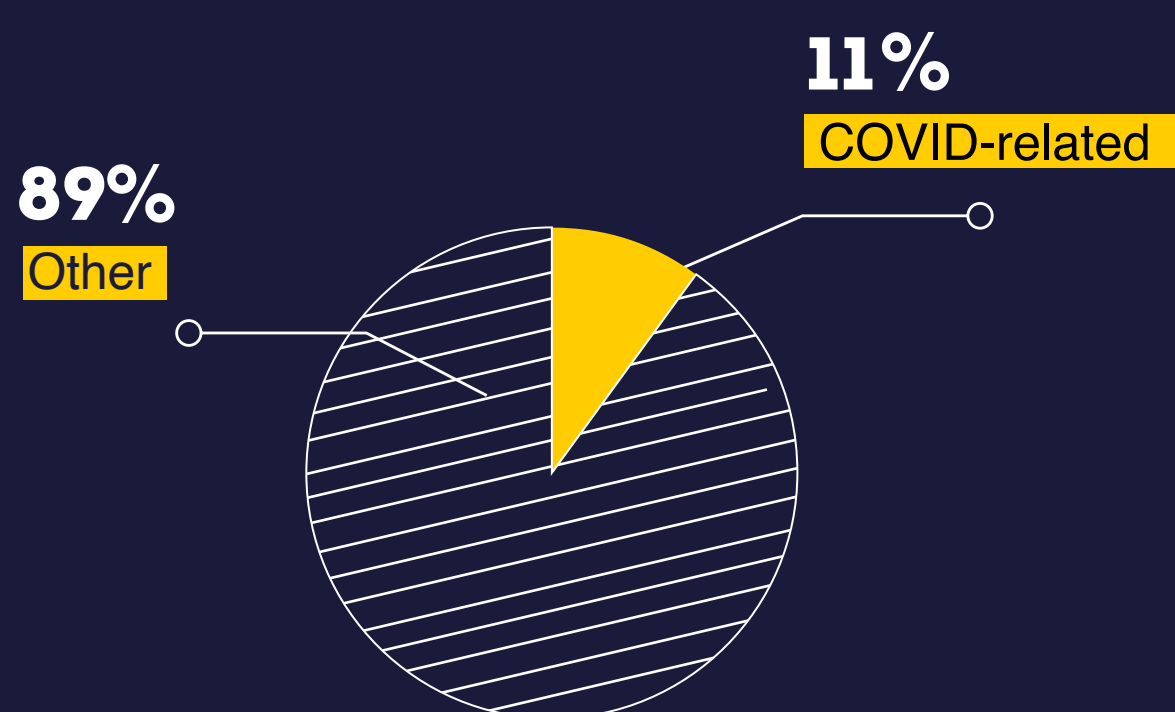
IN AUGUST, DISINFORMATION IN THE EU KEEPS WIDENING ITS SCOPE TO COVER DIFFERENT TOPICS

Monthly brief no. 15 – EDMO fact-checking network

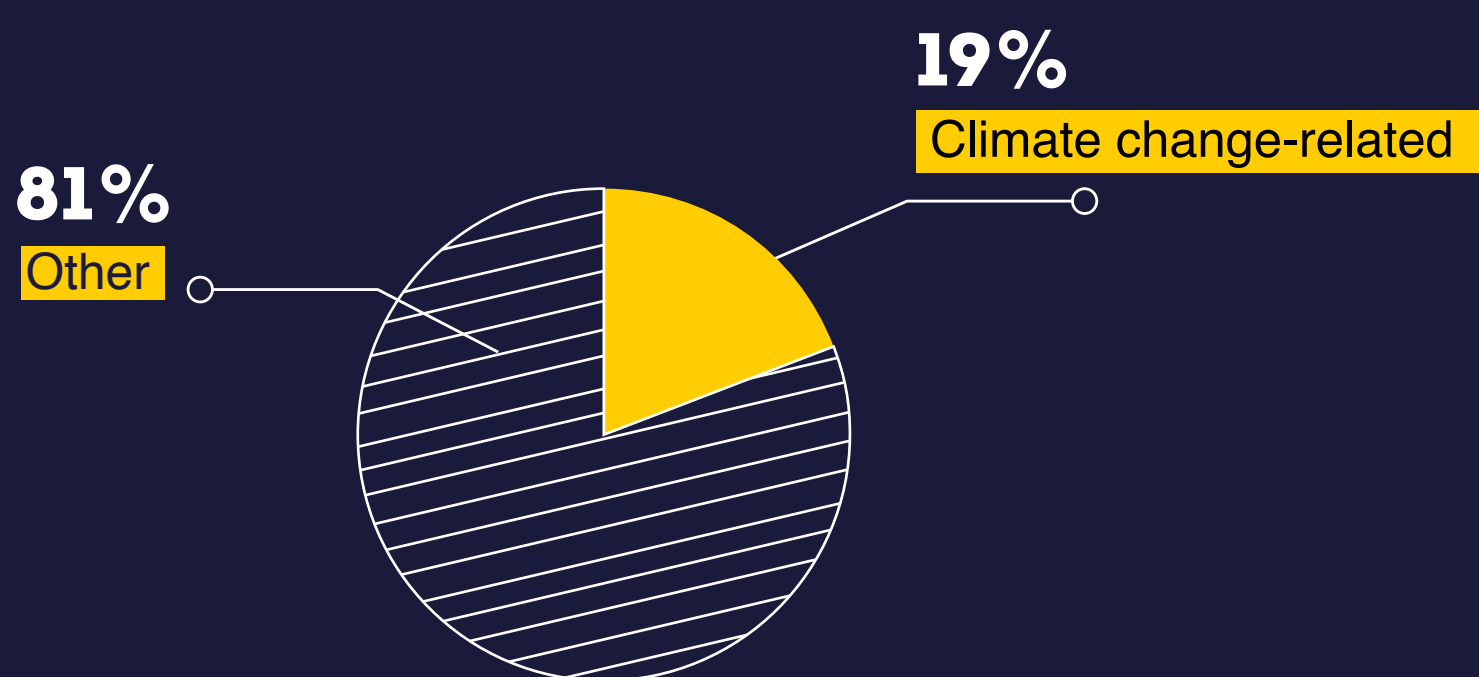
IN AUGUST, DISINFORMATION BREAKS UP TO COVER DIFFERENT TOPICS, FOCUSING MOSTLY ON CLIMATE CHANGE, THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE, AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



The 27 organizations* part of the EDMO fact-checking network that contributed to this brief published a total of 1.187 fact-checking articles in August 2022.

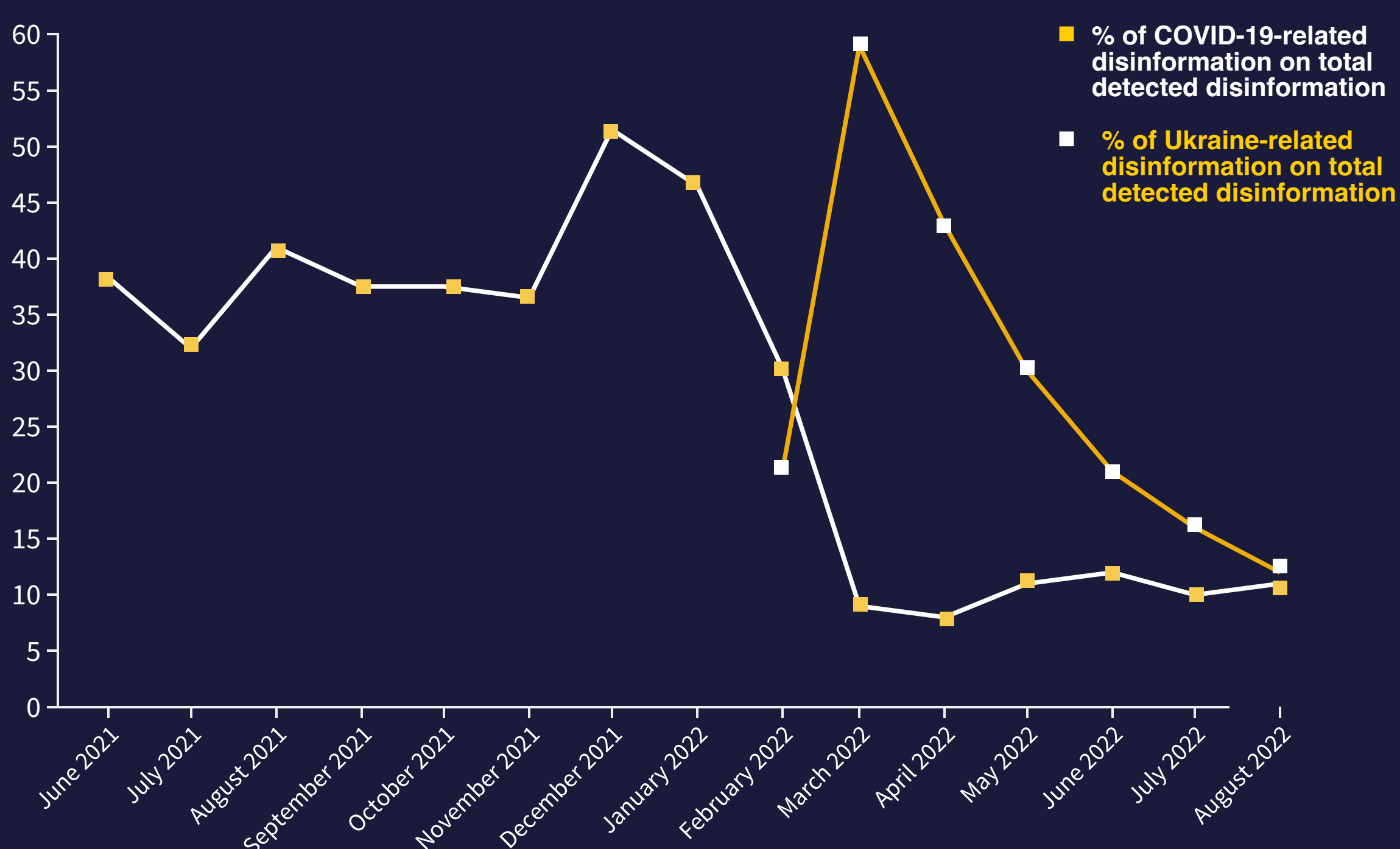


Out of these articles, 138 (12%) focused on Ukraine-related disinformation; 127 (11%) focused on COVID-19-related disinformation; and 225 (19%) focused on climate change-related disinformation.



* Organizations that contributed to this brief: *PagellaPolitica/Facta, AFP, Tjekdet, Maldita, Factcheck Vlaanderen, Verificat, FranceTv, Pravda, The Journal Fact-Check, Freedom House Romania, Poligrafo, Efe Verifica, Knack, Delfi, Correctiv, Demagog (PI), VRTNWS, Lakmusz, Nieuwscheckers, VerificaRTVE, Faktabaari, Ostro, Eesti Päevaleht, Les Surligneurs, Re:Baltica, Faktisk, Ellinika Hoaxes*

COVID-19-RELATED DISINFORMATION STAYS STABLE, WHILE UKRAINE RELATED DISINFORMATION REACHES ITS LOWEST SHARE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE CONFLICT



On the other hand, the share of detected disinformation about climate change increased slightly in August, passing from 15% to 19%. The main narratives conveyed by false news about climate change are similar to those detected in the past, and aim to discredit the effects of climate change, question its actual causes, or plainly deny the existence of the phenomenon.

DISINFORMATION KEEPS FRAGMENTING IN AN ATTEMPT TO COVER DIFFERENT TOPICS

- A year ago, more than 40% of the detected disinformation was Covid-19-related. In March 2022, almost 60% of the detected disinformation focused on the Ukraine conflict. In August 2022, these two topics combined accounted for less than a quarter of the total detected disinformation.
- According to the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data provided by the 27 organizations that contributed to this brief, the landscape of disinformation in the European Union appears to be losing homogeneity in favor of a general fragmentation, which allows false news to cover a variety of popular topics.
- This is also in line with the traditional news cycle which, after focusing almost exclusively on the pandemic and then on the war in Ukraine, has progressively differentiated its coverage.
- The fact that disinformation has widened its scope could cause more people to get in touch with false or misleading news.

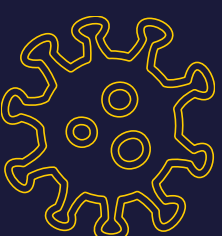
THE MOST POPULAR TOPICS FOR DISINFORMATION IN AUGUST 2022 WERE:



The war in Ukraine: groundless, negative feelings toward Ukrainian refugees; Ukrainians commit atrocities on their own people; the war is staged.



Climate change: misleading weather maps used to exaggerate the effects of climate change; exaggerated or baseless criticisms of electric cars; climate change denial.



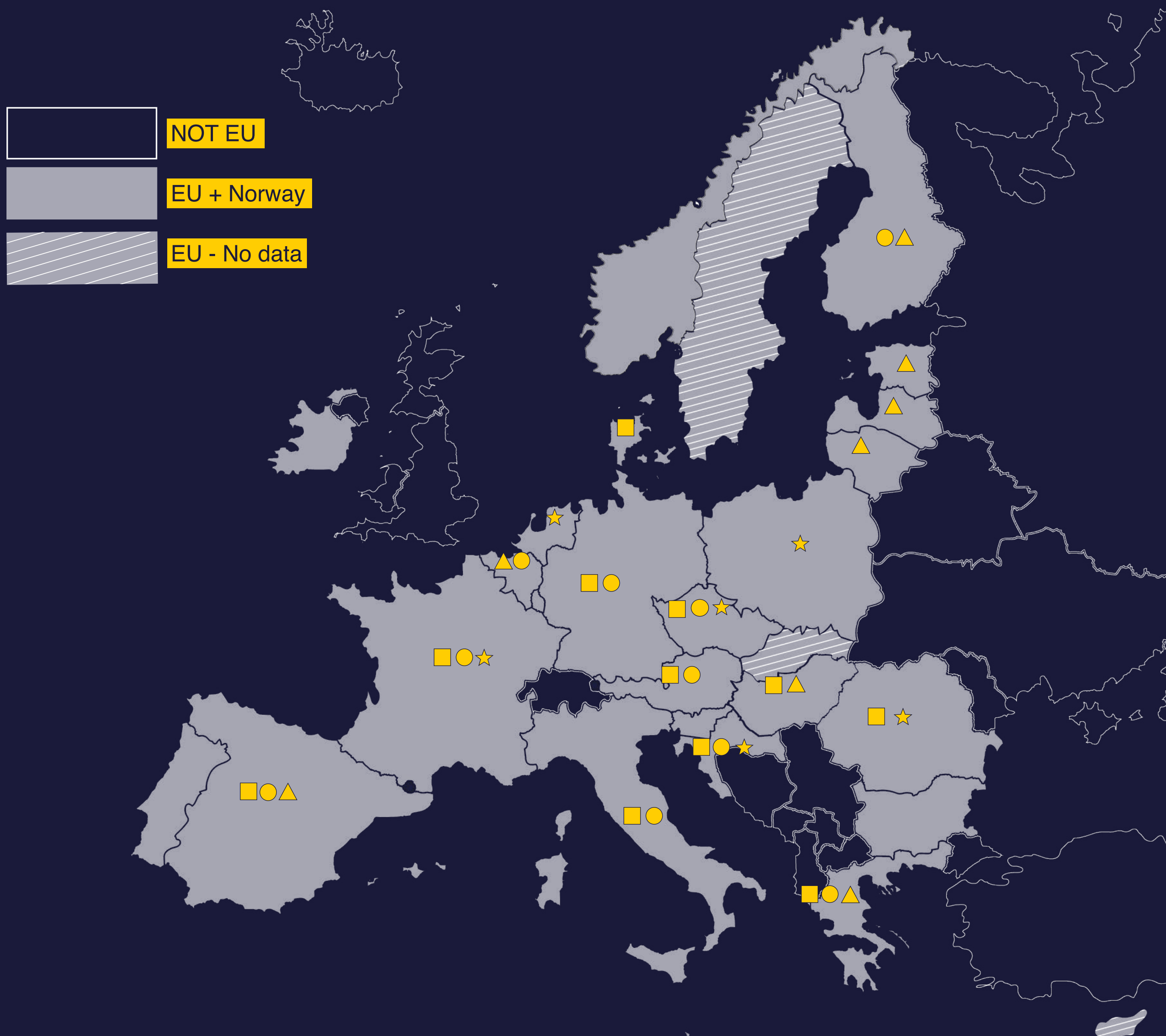
Covid-19: vaccines are harmful and often lead to death; baseless reports of Covid-19 vaccines side effects, such as infertility or exaggerated rates of miscarriages; vaccines were not properly tested.



Inflation: Inflation has nothing to do with the war in Ukraine; inflation is a 'lie' made up by national governments; food and gas prices are remaining much lower in other countries; exaggeration of the negative consequences the surge in energy prices will have on EU citizens.

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

- Out-of-context videos of a festival in Piedmont, Italy, associated with the protests of anti-government farmers in the Netherlands ([e.g.](#))
- Forest fires are caused on purpose with helicopters ([e.g.](#))
- ▲ The World Economic Forum (WEF) calls to end ‘wasteful’ private car ownership ([e.g.](#))
- ★ Weather maps are being manipulated to exaggerate climate change ([e.g.](#))



THE MOST SIGNIFICANT VERIFIED DISINFORMATION STORIES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL:



A national law about consent will require men to sign a written contract to have sex



Hungarian schools are preparing to switch to online education due to increased utility prices



The EU is forcing Romanians to eat insects and insects' wheat

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 August 2022. Number of respondents: 27.

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