

European Digital Media Observatory

D.16 Public Report M24

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The European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), launched in June 2020, is an independent observatory bringing together fact-checkers and academic researchers with expertise in the field of online disinformation, social media platforms, journalist driven media and media literacy practitioners. The Observatory acts as a platform that gathers stakeholders and evidence and that provides tools with the idea that disinformation can be addressed through a deeper understanding of the phenomenon's relevant actors, vectors, methods, dissemination dynamics, targets, and impact on society. The relevance of EDMO's mission has become even more evident in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and most recently the war in Ukraine, underlining the real and urgent threat posed to our societies by online disinformation.

EDMO is based on a consortium composed of the European University Institute – with both the School of Transnational Governance (STG) and the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF) – the Athens Technology Center (ATC), Aarhus University (in particular DATALAB – Center for Digital Social Research) and Pagella Politica (PP). The consortium is led by the European University Institute and in particular by the STG. With the work of an Executive Board and thanks to the advice of an Advisory Board the consortium brings together stakeholders in the field of disinformation, while maintaining the independence and impartiality of the partners in the execution of the project.

This report was drafted as a joint effort of all EDMO partners. It aims to provide an overview of the activities carried out by EDMO during its second year of activity, namely between May 2021 and May 2022.

In order to describe the most relevant developments in EDMO's activities, the report will be articulated around the five main tasks upon which the project is structured.

1. Setting up a secure online collaborative platform for fact-checkers and researchers supporting the analysis of disinformation campaigns and a web portal providing public information to raise awareness about disinformation;
2. Creating a governance body ensuring public trust in the work of the platform and establishing a framework to provide secure access to data of online platforms for research purposes;
3. Supporting and facilitating coordination of independent fact-checking activities in Europe, including the mapping of fact-checking activities in Europe and the creation of searchable directories aggregating fact-checks and media literacy material from external repositories;
4. Supporting and facilitating the coordination of academic research activities on disinformation in Europe and creating a repository with relevant peer-reviewed scientific literature;
5. Providing academic input and methodological support to public authorities in monitoring the policies put in place by online platforms to limit the spread and the impact of disinformation.





With the view to establishing EDMO as a key resource in the field of countering online disinformation in Europe, during its first years of activities, the consortium has responded to the best of its abilities to the diverse contemporary challenges arising in the European information ecosystem. This has often required EDMO to go beyond what was originally included in the remit of the project.

A noteworthy example of such commitment can be found in EDMO's response to the disinformation spreading around the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Mindful of the Observatory's mission to coordinate projects and actions aimed at identifying disinformation, uprooting its sources or diluting its impact, supporting fact-checking and quality information, and connecting related expert communities, this unforeseen event prompted EDMO to act beyond the initial scope of the project. With the set-up of the Taskforce on Disinformation and the War in Ukraine, EDMO brought together some of the brightest minds in the field in order to elaborate the best possible responses to the information disorders around the Ukraine conflict. Among others, the collective investigations and briefs on the war in Ukraine as well as the Taskforce's final recommendations for policy makers, technology companies, newsrooms and civil society, showed the pivotal role of the Observatory and the potential of the project.

Additionally, the results of the work carried out by EDMO Working Group on Platform-to-Researcher Data Access are paramount when it comes to facilitating academic research. The draft Code of Conduct included in the Report of the working group is an exemplary first step to provide a framework for independent researchers' access to platform data in a GDPR compliant manner.



1. Task I

1.1 Executive Summary

Task I of EDMO deals with the set-up and operations of i) a secure online platform – Truly Media – supporting the detection and analysis of disinformation campaigns and ii) a web portal providing public information to raise awareness about disinformation: iii) organisation of events and trainings: iv) outreach In the context of this Task, ATC is responsible for setting up and operating Truly Media to support members joining the network in detecting and analysing disinformation campaigns, as well as enhancing Truly Media with new functionalities, tools, and services for fact-checking and academic research activities. Additional features have been added to the platform by the time of writing this report to assist the community of fact-checkers and national Hubs and enhance collaboration among them. For instance, more translation capabilities, enhanced chat functionalities, login through the eID system, and capabilities for social listening and analysis of online topics and communities. Work is also in progress for creating a searchable archive of fact-checks coming from all the EDMO Hubs. Such an archive will enable the research and fact-checking community to search through, export, and analyse thousands of fact-checks supported by enhanced search, filtering, and translation capacities. This last activity is also connected with Task III.

Task I is also concerned with the continuous operation, maintenance, and update of EDMO's web portal. The portal provides access to EDMO-related news and events, as well as a variety of fact-checking and educational resources, such as disinformation-related repositories, [investigations](#) carried out by EDMO's fact-checking community around prominent world events like Covid-19 and the recent war in Ukraine, [fact-checking briefs](#), and [research reports](#). The website is constantly updated in line with the content produced by EDMO and the (multi)national EDMO Hubs.

Finally, Task I deals with EDMO training and outreach activities, including shaping and implementing EDMO training offer, as well as working to further develop EDMO's communication strategy, producing EDMO's quarterly e-newsletter, participating in conferences, and organising EDMO's interactions with key stakeholders through meetings and public events.

1.2 Activities

1.2.1 Operation of the EDMO platform and enhancement with new functionalities

In the scope of this activity, ATC is responsible for operating and enhancing EDMO's secure online collaborative platform. The platform is currently supporting the members of EDMO's fact-checking community in their collaborative investigations, while it is also allowing the representatives of the EDMO Hubs to further intra-hub collaborations. ATC continues to update and enhance existing platform functionalities with new features and improvements.





A prominent example is the amelioration of the platform's chat: a group chat including all the members of an EDMO workspace inside the platform. Other innovations are a multiple-login option that allows platform users to switch between different workspaces (i.e., between the EDMO Fact-checkers and EDMO Hubs workspaces) from the same account, the possibility to register and login through the eID system, and alerts when users add in the platform content that already exists in previous Collections.

Moreover, the platform – through the integration of the eTranslation services provided by EU's Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) – supports the translation of articles and reports from/to English and other EU languages. This way, the reports, briefs, and articles that result from the collaborative work of the members of EDMO's fact-checking community can be translated from English to the national languages and published on the websites of the former. Vice versa, it is possible to translate to English and publish content on EDMO's web portal content written by community members in their national language.

ATC has developed the first version of a social listening functionality that enables the aggregation of content from social media (i.e., Twitter, Facebook public pages, YouTube) and other sources (i.e., blogs, RSS feeds) and its storage in the platform's storage layer for further analysis. The social listening functionality currently supports three main processes, articulated below.

1.2.1.1 Aggregation and analysis of social media content

The platform enables the aggregation of online content from social media and other web sources based on keywords. This functionality is useful both for fact-checkers and researchers using the platform. The aggregated content is processed in real-time to extract useful insights – popular hashtags, top influencers, popular images, most active authors, most mentioned locations, organisations, etc. These indications provide users with an overview of the most important aggregated insights for a given topic they wish to monitor. Moreover, the functionality offers a first statistical analysis of the data set as a whole, as well as the top ten extracted sub-topics within the given monitored topic.

1.2.1.2 Twitter “Historical Search”

The aggregation functionality has been further enhanced to support the so-called “Historical Search” option for Twitter. Instead of aggregating content starting from the day of creating the monitoring task onwards, “Historical Search” attempts to extract all the tweets mentioning any given term also during the previous seven days. By using this functionality, fact-checkers and disinformation researchers can discover how a rumor, circulating on Twitter for the past few days or hours, emerged. When the historical extraction is completed, researchers are able to use a series of filters in order to create complex queries and limit the aggregated data.



The Community detection feature presents the communities which were detected within the aggregated sample. It relies on mapping social media users and hashtags. In the end, each community's user profile is further analysed by a lightweight bot detection service to be marked as suspicious when most of the predefined criteria are met. Both a grid and a graph view are offered in order to facilitate the analysis of the results.

Finally, to better facilitate the collaboration and sharing of relevant resources and news among EDMO Hubs, ATC developed an EDMO social wall, allowing users of the platform to post relevant news, updates, events, interesting content, etc. The posts are visible to all EDMO users, who may also like a user's post or leave their comments below it.

This activity is continuous, and ATC will keep operating and updating the platform. In terms of future developments, ATC is currently working to develop a digital archive containing fact-checks coming from the EDMO Hubs. It will enable the research and fact-checking community to search through, export, and analyse thousands of fact-checks supported by enhanced search, filtering and translation capacities. This last activity is also connected with Task III.

So far, 33 fact-checking organisations from 26 different European countries are part of the EDMO [fact-checking community](#) and have access to EDMO's platform and functionalities. At the same time, all eight EDMO Hubs have also been provided with access to the platform, through a separate working space. A total of around 100 individual users have access through EDMO to the two working spaces within the platform.

1.2.2 Operation and update of EDMO's web portal

This activity involves the design and release of EDMO's web portal to the public, as well as its continuous maintenance and update. An initial version of the web portal for the general public has been built and was launched at the beginning of the project (2 June 2020) under the domain www.edmo.eu. Since then, the web portal is constantly updated and enhanced with new content and pages. Presently, the portal provides access to EDMO-related news and events, as well as a variety of fact-checking and educational resources, such as disinformation-related repositories, investigations carried out by EDMO's fact-checking community around prominent world events like Covid-19 and the recent war in Ukraine, fact-checking briefs and periodic insights on the disinformation around the war in Ukraine, and research reports. The website is constantly updated in line with the content produced by EDMO and the (multi)national EDMO Hubs.

Below, a summary of the relevant website updates and new developments:

- General updates to the portal's webpages, as well as updates to the [News](#) and [Events](#) sections;



- Design of new webpages, such as the [EDMO Calendar](#) webpage and the [Fact-checking community](#) page (which includes the application form), as well as the [Admission Criteria](#) and the [Members of Fact-checking community](#) webpages;
- Implementation on the web portal of EDMO's [Scientific Publications](#) repository, which provides an overview of academic research within the field of disinformation. Entries in the repository are searchable, while several filters help users navigate through the repository's content and find academic publications of their interest.
- Most recently, EDMO partners ATC and Aarhus University have launched the [Research Activities](#) repository listing all academic/research institutions and departments working on disinformation. The repository allows visitors to browse and search through the listings in the repository.
- Update of the fact-checking activities repository with an editorial section, to present mini-portraits of the featured fact-checking initiatives in the repository.
- Two new website sections have been created under the "Publications" menu, the [Fact-checking Briefs](#) and [Investigations](#) sections, to present the joint investigations and analyses of the disinformation and fact-checking landscape carried out by Pagella Politica and the members of EDMO's fact-checking network.
- A dedicated webpage for the [EDMO Hubs](#) has been created to present the (multi)national Hubs and their objectives. Through an interactive map, website users can browse the list of Hubs, the geographical areas they cover, and the related information for each Hub.
- Various improvements have been made to EDMO's homepage, which was restructured and updated to highlight and bring forth dynamic content, such as EDMO's investigations and the latest news.
- A dedicated [webpage](#) has been developed to present fact-checked information around the war in Ukraine, also containing a table currently listing more than 1500 entries of fact-checked information. Relevant posts, news, and investigations tagged "Ukraine" are also fetched and presented under the table.
- A dedicated [webpage](#) to present EDMO's Taskforce on the war in Ukraine and its activities was created.
- Periodic insights on the disinformation narratives about the war in Ukraine are presented on a dedicated [webpage](#). Moreover, the latest insight is also presented on the War in Ukraine dedicated webpage.

1.2.3 Impact of EDMO's web portal

A total of 36.108 users have visited the web portal, while the web portal has a total of 91.973 page views for the period February 2021 - March 2022 (15/03/2022).



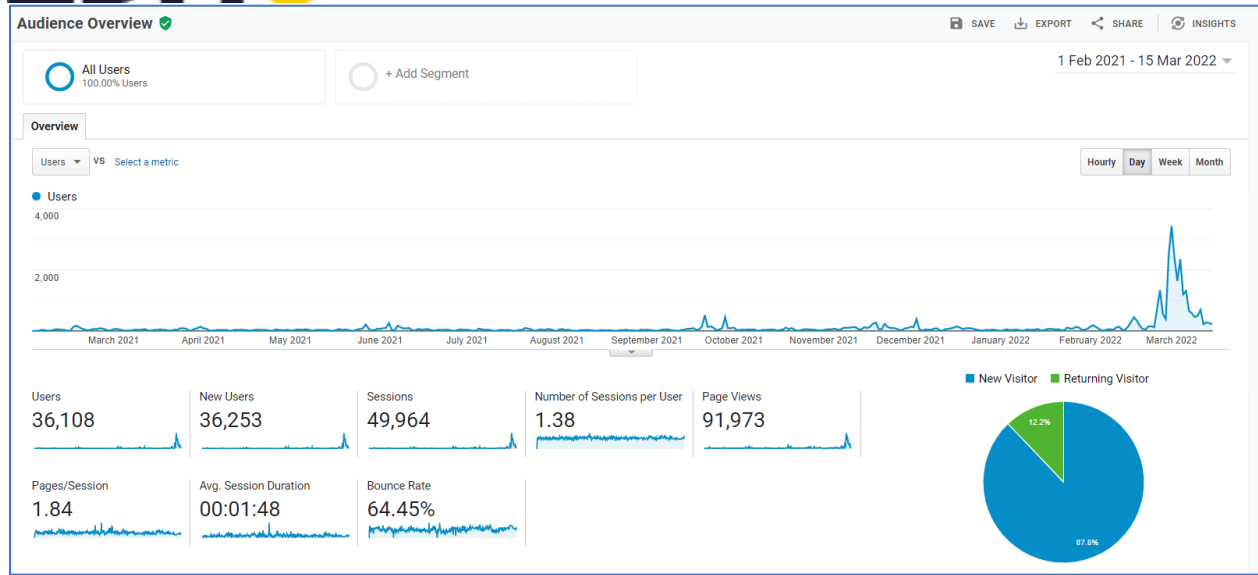


Figure 1: Audience overview for EDMO's web portal. Source: Google Analytics

Regarding content on the EDMO web portal, the 'Homepage' is the most visited webpage with a total of 23.601 page views (25.66% of all page views), followed closely by the "War in Ukraine" webpage, which has collected a total of 22.790 page views in less than a month since it was released.

About 33.5% of visitors directly reach the web portal, 30.3% reach the web portal from organic search sites, 13.9% come from referral, while 21.7% from social media and other sites.

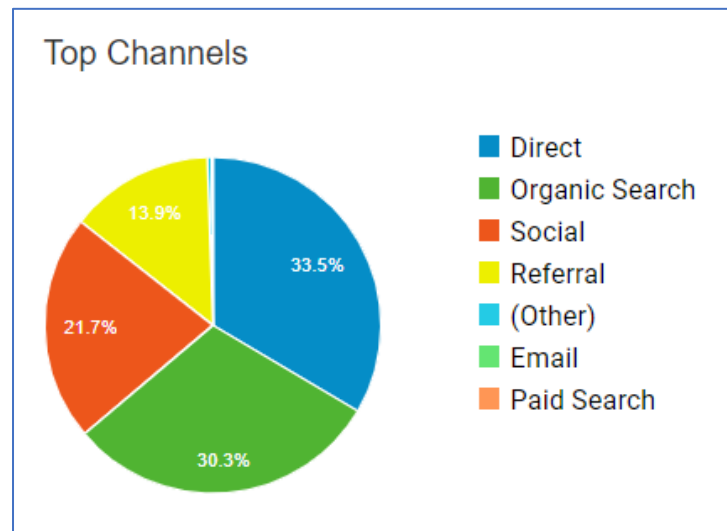


Figure 2: Overview of top acquisition channels for EDMO's web portal. Source: Google Analytics



Finally, it should be noted that between February 2022 and March 2022 there was a drastic increase in website users and page views, with the number of users peaking at 3.438 daily users on 01/03/2022. Indicatively, up until 23/02/2022 the average number of daily website users was around 100, while after EDMO started publishing content about the war in Ukraine, the numbers increased almost ten-fold, averaging 1.000 users per day.

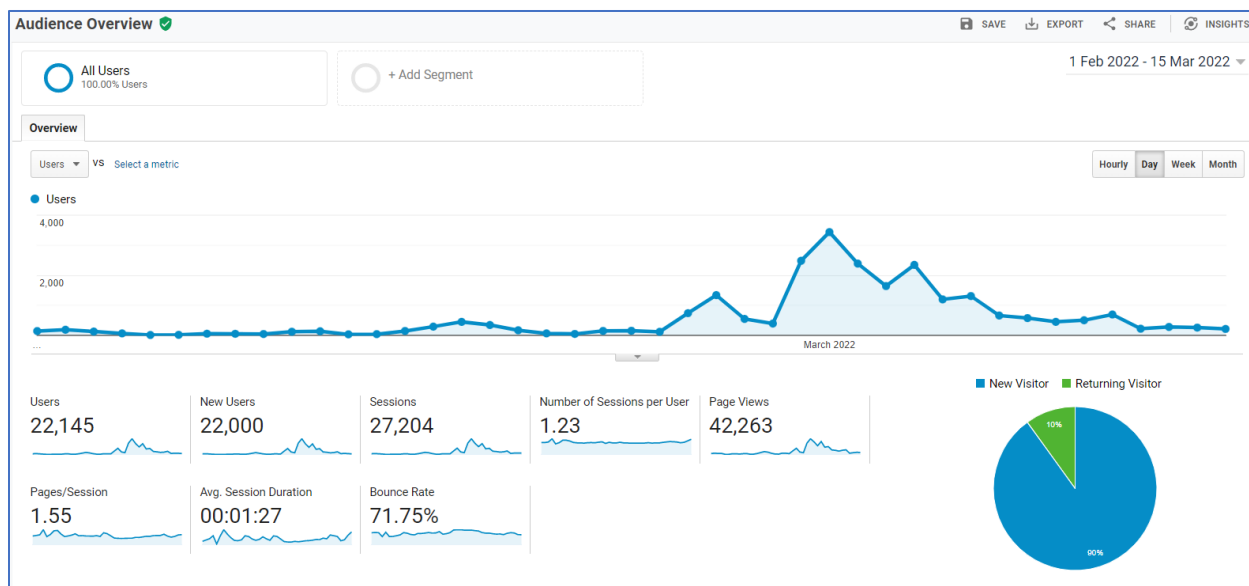


Figure 3: Audience overview 01/02/2022 - 15/03/2022. Source Google Analytics

1.2.4 Incident Report Management-Customer support

This activity deals with the daily operation of the physical infrastructure and software for EDMO's platform and web portal, as well as the necessary service management activities and tasks that ensure that the platform and its functionalities, including the web portal, are available at all times and that, in case of failure, the full functionality of the platform can be restored within the specified time frames.

Both EDMO's platform and portal have been constantly available from the beginning of the contract period. Moreover, appropriate measures and activities were implemented by ATC to ensure the constant availability and operation of the platform and the portal. Via the platform, users are able to directly inform ATC's technical support team of any problems they might experience, thanks to the feedback button located on each user's profile area. Users may also contact the technical support team by sending an email to support@truly.media.com or support@edmo.eu. A dedicated support team working on shifts receives support requests and initiates the incident report management process.





On 15/03/2022 a large-scale Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack targeted <https://edmo.eu/>. The attack affected the operation and availability of the web portal for a very brief period of time. ATC's technical team managed to quickly mitigate the attack and restore the operation and availability of the web portal. Due to security reasons, further information on the attack cannot be publicly shared.

The activity is ongoing throughout the whole duration of EDMO's platform and portal operation. Additional security measures are being taken to ensure the smooth operation of the web portal even under a large-scale, sophisticated DDoS attack like the one mentioned above.

Due to the cyber-attack, EDMO's portal experienced a downtime of about 16 hours, during which the website was unresponsive or active with sensibly slow response times. Nevertheless, the total uptime of the website remains extremely high at 99.8%. The platform is constantly up and running, while any technical issues are managed and resolved immediately, following the set incident report management process.

1.2.5 Annual Training Event preparations

ATC has organised multiple training activities on the use of EDMO's platform for EDMO's fact-checking community and the EDMO Hubs. In the context of such activities, ATC organised a half-day face-to-face training event in Brussels, co-located with EDMO's 2022 Annual Conference. For the preparations for the Annual Training Event, ATC coordinated with EUI-STG. All the necessary preparations were made including booking the venue, preparing the agenda and the communication material for the event, contacting external speakers, creating a registration form for participants, and disseminating the event online.

The event took place at Radisson Collection Hotel in Brussels on 14 June 2022, from 14.00 to 18.00 CEST. The training event, titled "EDMO Annual Training: Dealing with and verifying digital content—theory and practice", was divided into three sessions.

Session A: Countering Casualties of Conflict and War: Tools, Tips, and Strategies.

- Keynote speaker: Jochen Spangenberg, Deutsche Welle and EDMO Advisory Board.

Session B: Countering Disinformation: Stories from the field

- Bucha: how reporters and fact-checkers worked together to get the facts right | Estelle Péard, Agence France-Presse and DE FACTO Observatory of Information;
- Verification techniques for the Ukraine conflict | George Sargent, Reuter;
- "Crypto-funding" to disinform | Ana Romero-Vicente, EU DisinfoLab and Belgium-Luxembourg Research Hub on Digital Media and Disinformation (EDMO BELUX);
- From Covid-19 to pro-Russian hoaxes: tips and ideas for conducting a collaborative investigation within EDMO | Laura Loguercio, Pagella Politica and EDMO





Session C: Collaborative Verification in EDMO: how you can be part of it

- Presenters: Nikos Sarris & Danae Tsabouraki, Athens Technology Center and EDMO

1.2.6 Training and outreach activities

The European University Institute School of Transnational Governance (EUI STG), with the support of its communications specialists and in collaboration with the partners of the consortium, is responsible for the organisation of training and outreach activities directed at EDMO's main stakeholders (i.e., the research, fact-checking, and media literacy communities). The below section aims at providing an overview of the most relevant developments regarding EDMO's communication strategy, social media channels, and media relations as well as of EDMO's training offer, participation in conferences, and planning of public events including the Second Annual Countering Online Disinformation Conference.

1.2.6.1 EDMO Communications strategy

Since its outset in June 2020, EUI STG, in collaboration with its communication specialists, has been at work to ensure a communication and outreach strategy capable of supporting the project developments including the enlargement of the EDMO network and enhancing the dissemination and visibility of its achievements. Among others, as previously detailed, this has also involved the restructuring of the website [homepage](#) and the creation of a website [section](#) entirely dedicated to the EDMO Hubs. In February 2022, EDMO started its work to develop an updated communications plan. While in its first year of life EDMO's communications had focused on providing a clear picture of the project mission, main objectives, and partners, the updated communications strategy aims to do so by focusing on EDMO's main activities, initiatives, and achievements, essentially explaining what EDMO is through what EDMO does. Most recently, and in collaboration with STG communication specialists, EDMO has engaged in the creation of an explainer video, an EDMO flyer, and other targeted efforts to support and widen the reach of the EDMO activities.

EDMO Explainer video and postcard

In preparation for the EDMO 2022 Annual Conference and in line with the project's updated communication strategy, a one-minute [animated video](#) has been developed by the EDMO team in collaboration with EUI-STG communication specialists and with the support of an external agency. The video, available on EDMO's website, offers at a glance an overview of what EDMO does as a multi-national and multi-stakeholder platform to counter the phenomenon of online disinformation.



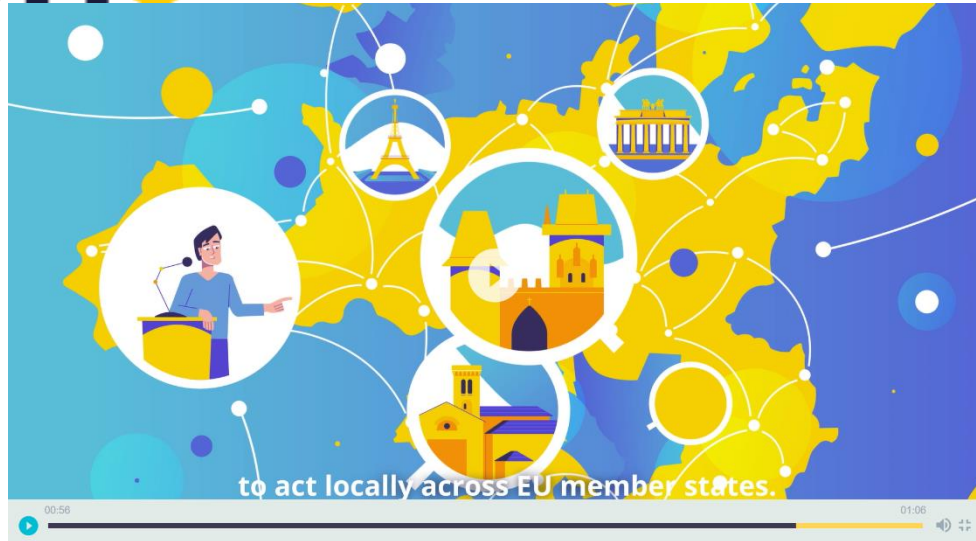


Figure 4: EDMO explainer video

In the same line, a flyer in the shape of a postcard was also realised in order to be disseminated first at the EDMO 2022 Annual Conference and in any other relevant future occasion. The postcard provides an effective “at hand” description of what EDMO is and does to tackle online disinformation.



Figure 5: EDMO postcard

EDMO Hubs’ brand identity

In the context of a wider exercise aiming at laying the ground for a future collaboration framework among EDMO central and the EDMO Hubs, EDMO has supported the Hubs in the development of a coherent visual identity and branding. Relying on the EUI STG communication specialists, in





September 2021, EDMO central proposed to the Hubs a set of sub mark logos that are tailored to each Hub while recalling some fundamental elements of the visual identity of EDMO. After integrating comments and consulting with the Hubs, eight tailored toolkits were produced including the Hub's logo in full and inverted colour, two versions of social media icons on blue and white background as well as corresponding vector files and brand identity guidelines to ensure the correct use of the logos. Additional branding material such as templates was also provided.

LOGOS - HUBS

examples



Figure 6: EDMO sub mark logos Hubs Logos

Social Media

EDMO's social media strategy is implemented through EDMO's main social media channel –Twitter. The EDMO Twitter account ([@EDMO_EUI](https://twitter.com/EDMO_EUI)) is managed by the EDMO Team through a shared social media calendar hosted on Loomly. Since March 2021, the account's reach has been growing with a constant increase in the number of followers, reaching 6961 at the moment of writing this report.

EDMO's work on disinformation regarding the Ukraine crisis has been drawing particular attention to its Twitter account. The number of monthly tweet impressions was already on the rise since December 2021 (35.9K in November 2021, 67.8 K in December 2021, 83.7K in January 2022), but increased significantly from the moment the conflict started to reach 180K in February 2022 and 395K in March 2022. The number of impressions remained high ever since, bringing the average of tweet impressions to 94.2K for the period covered by this report.



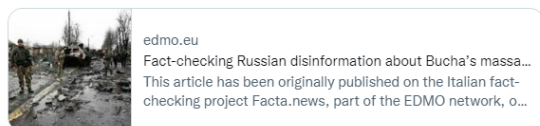


EDMO European Digital Media Observatory
@EDMO_EUI

The images coming from #Bucha are shocking, but their authenticity has been questioned.

The original footage analyzed by #EDMOeu factcheckers unequivocally shows that the victims in Bucha are real.

#WarInUkraine #RussiaUkraineWar #disinformation



6:07 PM · Apr 4, 2022 · Twitter Web App

Tweet Analytics

136

92

10

Impressions ①
28,016

Engagements ①
1,171

Detail expands ①
334

New followers ①
0

Profile visits ①
90

Link clicks ①
454

Figure 7: EDMO top tweet for April 2022 on the fact-checking conducted in Bucha with analytics

EDMO's social media activity has reflected the independent positioning in the public debate that EDMO adopted from the outset. The main activity on Twitter aims at interacting with institutional accounts and the project partners in order to enhance the visibility of the Observatory's main activities, mission, and purpose, but also to widen the reach of specific events and trainings, as well as services offered to its main audiences.



This project has received funding from the European Union under Contract number: LC-01464044.



Figure 8: EDMO Tweet Thread on Hubs' public launch events

EDMO's communication is also supported by a YouTube playlist where multimedia resources are collected. Among others, the channel features the EDMO [video explainer](#), first launched during the EDMO 2022 Annual Conference, [video interviews to the EDMO Hubs](#) recorded during the first in-person meeting of the network in Florence, as well as the video-recordings of online debates engaging key stakeholders in the field such as [EDMO Workshop – “Media exemption” in the DSA: protecting editorial independence or a loophole for disinformation?](#) and the live streaming of the [EDMO Week Conference](#). The channel will continue to be populated with live streaming and recordings of online events as well as other material relevant to EDMO's community.

Since May 2022 EDMO is also present on LinkedIn. While the main social media channel remains Twitter, EDMO has decided to open a [LinkedIn page](#) in order to give wider visibility to activities aimed at enlarging the skillset of professionals in the field and in particular to its training offer.

Between March 2021 and May 2022, EDMO was mentioned more than 70 times in national and international media, such as El Pais or De Morgen. Moreover, it received coverage in many Brussels-based outlets such as Politico, Euractiv, and the European Union's Parliament Magazine. Besides reporting on the broader activities of the Observatory, the disinformation around the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the war in Ukraine received major attention. For example, EDMO Coordinator and Secretary General Paula Gori spoke to RaiRadio1, run by the Italian public broadcaster RAI, about EDMO's activities to tackle disinformation on the war in Ukraine. Also, the establishment of EDMO's Hubs attracted interest in the local and national media across Europe. In particular, the launch of the Italian Digital Media Observatory (IDMO) in September 2021 was widely reported in the Italian news.

1.2.6.2 Quarterly Newsletter

EUI-STG is responsible for drafting the EDMO newsletter in collaboration with all partners. From March 2021 to May 2022 seven issues of the newsletter have been sent and published on the EDMO website [dedicated page](#). EDMO newsletter reaches 1212 subscribers as of 21 July. Given the growing pace at which EDMO's network and activities are developing and in order to share more timely updates with key stakeholders in the field, the EDMO team has decided to issue a total of six newsletters in 2022. Further, following the set-up of a dedicated Taskforce on disinformation about the war in Ukraine, on 28 March EUI-STG issued a special newsletter to inform subscribers of all activities related to better understanding and tackling disinformation around the conflict in Ukraine.





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News

EDMO's taskforce on the war in Ukraine

Following the increasing circulation of disinformation related to the war in Ukraine, EDMO established an independent taskforce dedicated to collecting relevant materials to better understand disinformation trends and tackle disinformation campaigns spreading across the EU and EEA countries. The taskforce will collaborate with the EDMO Hubs and small-scale online media projects.



[more](#)

Figure 9: EDMO Newsletter Special Issue on Ukraine

After the release, on 31 May, of the [Report](#) by the Working Group on Platform-to-Researcher Data Access, an additional EDMO newsletter is in the process of being developed. This informational outlet will aim to keep interested stakeholders up to date with the developments regarding the draft Code of Conduct on how platforms can share data with independent researchers while protecting users' rights.

1.2.6.3 Training and Online Survey

EDMO provides residential or online training modules on understanding and tackling online disinformation. The development of EDMO's training offer is coordinated by EUI STG, in collaboration with the partners of the consortium.

In order to help identify the most relevant topics to plan upcoming training sessions, EDMO conducts regular online surveys for stakeholders working on tackling online disinformation. The latest online



survey on stakeholders' training needs was launched in May 2022 and remained open for 10 days. As already done for the previous one, launched in October 2021, the survey was published on EDMO's training webpage and promoted in the EDMO newsletter and on Twitter. Outcomes of the survey were analysed and are informing EDMO's training offer.

Following EDMO's first training module "The ABC of Fact-checking", held on 11-12 May 2021, a training on Advanced Fact-checking techniques and tools was held on 1-2 December 2021 followed by the two editions of the training module on "Evaluating the impact of media literacy initiatives", which took place respectively on 24-25 March and 26-27 April 2022. After liaising with the EDMO Advisory Board and relevant scientific coordinators, EUI STG has further developed the 2022 training calendar which is available [online](#). Upcoming modules will be dedicated to exploring a variety of topics and audiences, including, among others, the following: Understanding and handling disinformation - EDMO Training for practitioners focusing on Africa; EU policy on online disinformation; The InVID and WeVerify fact-checking toolbox; Historical approaches to disinformation and the revival of conspiracy theories; Researching online disinformation and accessing platform data; News literacy and tools to equip journalists to improve audience critical thinking skills; The cognitive neuroscience of disinformation; Online disinformation policy and regulation during elections; Disinformation economics.

EDMO Training Module on "Advanced fact-checking techniques and tools"

EDMO's [Advanced Fact-checking Training](#) organised by EUI-STG in collaboration with and under the scientific guidance of Pagella Politica was held online on 1-2 December 2021. The module was primarily aimed at expert fact-checking practitioners with a professional interest in learning more about the latest advancements in the area. Among the 30 participants, 17 were members of fact-checking organisations (of which 11 from the EDMO Hubs) and 7 were journalists working in the fact-checking field from several European countries – Poland, Netherlands, France, Luxembourg, Italy, Spain, Greece, Sweden, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Belgium.

The module was articulated in two parts. The first session saw the contribution of Bill Adair (DeWitt Wallace Center for Media & Democracy, Duke University) providing an overview of the latest advancements in the field of automated fact-checking, and of Denis Teyssou (Agence France-Presse) presenting the InVID-WeVerify software and demonstrating how it can be an effective solution to facilitate fact-checkers in their work. During the second part of the module, Megan Marrelli (Health Desk Meedan) explored with participants how the Health Desk Meedan has enabled successful cooperation between journalists and health experts and how best to join forces to provide accurate and relevant information regarding the Covid-19 pandemic. The feedback gathered from trainees who participated in the evaluation survey has been remarkably positive with a strong appreciation of the variety of the speakers, the interactive nature of the second session as well as of the practical demonstrations provided, especially about the InVID-WeVerify software.





EDMO Training Module on “Evaluating the impact of media literacy initiatives”

The first edition of EDMO’s training on [Evaluating the Impact of Media Literacy Initiatives](#) took place online on 24-25 March 2022. This training was specifically aimed at media literacy practitioners with an interest in learning more about monitoring and evaluation techniques to assess the impact of their media literacy interventions. The training module registered a great interest from practitioners in the field. Thirty-five participants from across Europe and beyond attended the first edition of the training including several representatives from the EDMO Hubs, media literacy organizations, and national media authorities. Due to the high number of applications, a second edition of this module took place on 26-27 April 2022, which included thirty participants from a range of countries across Europe and outside Europe.

The training was organised under the scientific coordination of Emma Goodman, expert in the media and information literacy at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and Martina Chapman, independent consultant specialising in media literacy policy and strategy development, research, and project management. Trainers included: Sonia Livingstone (LSE), Paul Mihailidis (Emerson College), Cameron Bailey & Alison Preston (Ofcom), and Andy Demeulenaere (Flemish Knowledge Centre for Digital and Media Literacy). In the absence of a widely agreed way to measure impact, the training session offered a deep dive into each step of the process of monitoring and evaluation and provided useful examples of measurement and assessment. To this end, it offered practical insights into each step of the process of monitoring and evaluation including collective exercises and examples of projects’ measurement and assessment. Overall feedback received from both sessions was positive and demonstrated the great interest in the field of evaluation for media literacy activities.

Given the excellent level of participation in the two training modules, it was decided to set up a LinkedIn group to foster the established connections and remained up to date about the topic of evaluating the impact of media literacy activities. Following the two online trainings, an [article by EDMO Advisory Board member Professor Sonia Livingstone](#) was published on the EDMO website. The article is based on Prof. Livingstone’s intervention during the trainings and explores the importance and complexity of measuring impact in media literacy work. Further material from the training, including recordings and links to useful resources in the field of evaluation of media literacy activities will be published on the EDMO website.

Understanding and handling disinformation - EDMO Training for media practitioners active on Africa

In recent years it has become increasingly evident that disinformation crosses borders with varying risks for different media landscapes, highlighting the importance of better understanding the similarities and differences of disinformation techniques, patterns, and flows and their impact on local





information environments. In this context, and given its unique role as a platform aiming to gather stakeholders working to tackle disinformation, EDMO plans to coordinate multiple regional training programs in collaboration with local fact-checking organisations, aiming to strengthen resilience to online disinformation in different information environments, while drawing from the expertise of the European EDMO network. The first training of the series is aimed at media practitioners active on Africa and is organised in collaboration with Africa Check and Fact Space West Africa, and will take place between 7-9 September 2022.

The training module for media practitioners active on Africa is composed of three sessions. The first session will focus on actors and techniques of disinformation, including agents, incentives and techniques of disinformation and social media analysis, and disinformation in Africa. The second session provides a deep dive into fact-checking and verification tools, also including fact-checking standards and ethics. The final session looks into the safety and protection of journalists, with a special focus on tools to support safe journalistic work in the context of the peculiarities of different media landscapes in Africa.

1.2.6.4 Preparation of the Second Annual Countering Online Disinformation Conference

Given the improved situation concerning the Covid-19 pandemic, the EDMO 2022 Annual Conference was envisaged as an in-person event to take place in Brussels at the Radisson Collection Hotel on 13-14 June 2022. The venue was functional to ensure the participation of key Brussels-based stakeholders as well as high-level representatives from the European Commission and European Parliament. Reaching its second year of activities, the EDMO 2022 Annual Conference aimed to explore what the Observatory is doing and has done so far to better understand, detect, and tackle disinformation, with a particular focus on the Covid-19 pandemic and the current conflict in Ukraine. The [program](#) of the one-and-a-half-day conference, published on EDMO's website on 28 April 2022, reflected this aim.

The first panel discussion was dedicated to the work EDMO carried out to identify the main disinformation trends concerning the war in Ukraine. The first day was also meant to set the scene for the delivery of the Report of the EDMO working group to the cabinet of European Commission Vice-President Věra Jourová. The [report](#), published on 31 May, includes a draft Code of Conduct on how platforms can share data with independent researchers while protecting users' rights. A video projection of short testimonials from various EDMO representatives and main stakeholders in the field closed the morning session. The [video](#), available on the EDMO YouTube channel, brings together insights on the main challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and how they have affected the information ecosystem.

Other panels tackled the relationship between neuroscience and disinformation, and national and multinational efforts to strengthen media and information literacy. The Strengthened Code of Practice





on Disinformation, expected to be released after the conference, was the first item on the agenda of the second day of the conference. Experts from academia, policymaking, and the private sector had been invited to discuss developments in the run-up to the revised code. The last panel was dedicated to deepening the discussion on the work carried out by the EDMO Working Group on access to data for research purposes. The conference closed with an outlook on EDMO's achievements and upcoming activities.

1.2.6.5 First Annual Countering Online Disinformation Conference - “EDMO Week”

The first Annual Countering Online Disinformation Conference took place between 7-11 June 2021 under the name of ‘EDMO Week’. While the dedicated report on the main outcomes of the conference is in the process of being drafted, the below paragraph provides a brief overview of the event. EDMO Week brought together 500+ participants representing platform users, the research community, media literacy experts, government, and industry to share ideas and discuss the latest trends in the field. The program focused on five macro-areas, namely: i) the need for a multi-stakeholder platform ii) fact-checking and journalism, iii) towards a new Code of Practice on Disinformation, iv) research, and v) EDMO goes local – Media and Information Literacy and the EDMO Hubs.

The event was also the occasion for two informal morning conversations. The latter focused on the key role of cooperation among fact-checkers and on the challenges and proposals for a methodology to assess the Code of Practice and its impact. Highlights included the keynote speech by Vice-President Věra Jourová and the official presentation of the EDMO Hubs that joined the EDMO network and were about to start the set-up of their activities to provide local insights. Recordings are available on [EDMO's YouTube Channel](#).





Figure 10: EDMO Week Panel “Towards a new Code of Practice on Disinformation”

1.2.6.6 Other events and meetings with institutions connected to EDMO

During the last year, EDMO has organised a variety of events, furthering and establishing relevant interaction with key stakeholders in the field as well as with institutions connected to EDMO, including the EDMO Hubs and the EU Small-scale Online Media Projects. Among the many activities that have taken place under this umbrella, below are some relevant examples.

Meetings with institutions connected to EDMO

Aiming for a strong dialogue and cooperation within the EDMO network, a framework of periodic meetings between the EDMO Executive Board and the representatives of the EDMO Hubs has been established. So far, three meetings have taken place: one online in January 2022 and two in Florence at the premises of the EUI STG in Palazzo Buontalenti.

The first gathering of the EDMO network, held on 7-8 September 2021, provided the opportunity for the Hubs to present and discuss each project’s main objectives, partners, and planned activities. The two days of interaction and exchanges aimed at sharing views on key objectives, elements, and instruments to build a solid collaboration framework for an integrated approach against online disinformation. The event was also a special opportunity to produce valuable multimedia material such as short [video interviews](#) of Hub’s representatives.



Figure 11: First in Presence Meeting of the EDMO Executive Board with the EDMO Hubs. Florence, 7 September 2021

Building on the outcomes of the first meeting, EDMO central developed a preliminary analysis of the key areas and instruments for discussion in order to develop a future collaboration framework which has been further explored during the second meeting of the network held online on 17-18 January 2022. Between February and March 2022, several workshops have been organised by EDMO central in order to gather specific input from experts within the Hubs' partner organisations on cooperation in the fields of research (Workshop on EDMO policy research and analysis, 14 February 2022), media literacy (Workshop with the EDMO Hubs on Media and Information Literacy, 1 March 2022) and fact-checking tools and techniques (Knowledge exchange workshop on EDMO Hubs technology, 3 March 2022).



Figure 12: Second Meeting of the EDMO Executive Board with the EDMO Hubs. Florence, 14 March 2022

Drawing from the above discussions, the third Meeting of the Hubs with the Executive Board, held on 14 March 2022 in Florence, was the occasion for EDMO central to present a more encompassing collaboration strategy defining the instruments, areas, and scope of cooperation within the EDMO network. The next in-person meeting with the EDMO Hubs is planned to take place in the context of the Central European Digital Media Observatory [International Conference](#) on 21-23 September 2022.

On 15 December 2021, EDMO also held an [information session](#) on the second call for the new EDMO Hubs under the Digital Europe Program. The event aimed at providing clear information on the application procedure as well as supporting the dissemination of the call.

Further, given its collaboration with the EU Small-scale Online Media Projects, on 11 February EDMO also organised a dedicated meeting. It was the occasion for the project coordinators to present their planned activities as well as share and discuss ideas for collaboration with the EDMO network.

On 15 March 2022, EDMO invited the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) to its premises in Florence. The meeting was attended by ERGA’s Chair, Karim Ibourki (Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel, CSA), ERGA’s Vice-Chair, Giacomo Lasorella (Autorità per le Garanzie nelle Comunicazioni, AGCOM), and representatives of EPRA and ERGA, Ľuboš Kukliš (Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission of Slovakia, CBR) to further discuss the collaboration of EDMO and ERGA, including in the context of the new Code of Practice on Disinformation.



Figure 13: EDMO-ERGA Meeting, Florence, 15 March 2022

1.2.6.7 EDMO panels at international conferences and events

During the course of 2021, EDMO organised a number of panel debates in the context of international and European conferences including the Sixteenth Edition of the Internet Governance Forum, the European Media and Information Literacy Week, and the 2021 Fundamental Rights Forum. Below, each of these panels is presented.

EDMO at the 2021 Fundamental Rights Forum

On 11 October, EDMO organised a panel debate in the context of the 2021 Fundamental Rights Forum. The panel, moderated by Madeleine de Cock Buning (Chair of the EDMO Advisory Board) focused on “Content moderation and freedom of expression in times of disinformation”. It provided a platform to exchange views and experiences among key stakeholders in the field including Robert



Post (Sterling Professor of Law at Yale Law School), Oreste Pollicino (Professor of Constitutional Law at Bocconi University and board member of FRA), Barbara Bukovska (Senior Director for Law and Politics at Article 19), and Alan Rusbridger (Member of the Facebook Oversight Board and former Editor-in-chief of The Guardian). Recordings of the event are available [here](#).

EDMO's Workshop at the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Week

The 2021 European Media Literacy Week was the occasion for EDMO to present its work in the media literacy field. On 28 October, EDMO organised the Workshop [United against disinformation: EDMO's work on media literacy](#). The event, moderated by Sally Reynolds (Media & Learning Association and EDMO Advisory Board), provided the opportunity to learn about the significant contributions that EDMO and its Hubs are planning to make in the field of media literacy. Emma Goodman (London School of Economics and Political Science) opened the workshop by presenting EDMO's plans in order to support existing and new efforts by media literacy practitioners. The Hubs then presented their strategies to empower media literacy practitioners in Europe as well as exchange and connect with other stakeholders in the field.

EDMO at the 16th Annual Internet Governance Forum (IGF 2021)

The 2021 Internet Governance Forum, held between 6-10 December 2021, was the perfect opportunity for EDMO to present its multi-stakeholder approach to tackling online disinformation. The panel debate, held on 9 December, explored how EDMO's multidisciplinary community works across borders to counter and prevent the negative effects of online disinformation. The panel generated strong interest for cooperation from many stakeholders worldwide. A report of the conference is available [here](#).

1.2.6.8 Participation in external events, consultations, and meetings with stakeholders

Members of EDMO's governance body and staff participate and represent EDMO in public events related to online disinformation on a regular basis. Members of EDMO's governance bodies were also involved in the EC online multi-stakeholder meetings on the Guidance for the strengthening of the Code of Practice on Disinformation. Further information on EDMO's participation in external events may be found on the [EDMO Events Calendar](#). EDMO is also participating in events organised within the EU-US Trade and Technology Council's (TTC) Working Group 6 on Misuse of Technology Threatening Security and Human Rights.

1.2.7 EDMO coordination role towards the Hubs

Given the growth of the EDMO network during the last year of activities, EUI-STG has been very active to ensure coordination and establish a functional workflow to enable smooth collaboration with





the [institutions connected to EDMO](#) including the EDMO Hubs but also the EU Small-scale Online Media Projects. To this end, among other activities and tools described above (see in particular section 1.2.6.1 and 1.2.6.6.) EUI-STG has established periodic meetings between EDMO Hubs representatives and the EDMO Executive Board to discuss the state of play and main challenges for the network while reflecting on the next steps. Furthermore, EUI-STG designed a specific coordination strategy between EDMO and the Hubs which was presented and approved during the last Meeting of the EDMO Executive Board with the EDMO Hubs, held in Florence on 14 March 2022.

1.2.8 EDMO Taskforce on disinformation and the war in Ukraine

Following the increasing spread of disinformation related to the conflict in Ukraine, on 3 March, the European Digital Media Observatory established an independent [Taskforce on Disinformation and the War in Ukraine](#). Chaired by Dr. Claire Wardle, the Taskforce includes 18 members representing academia, journalism, media, and civil society, from 10 countries across the EU, acting in their personal capacity. The Taskforce has met weekly to discuss developments and trends in relation to disinformation in the context of Ukraine and to design and steer different projects. The members of the Taskforce collaborated, among others, with the EDMO Hubs and the EU Small-scale Online Media Projects. With the establishment of a dedicated Taskforce, EDMO aims to go one step further in facilitating coordination of the efforts to promote societal resilience to disinformation around the Ukraine war. This has involved collecting and sorting relevant material covering various aspects such as fact-checking, investigations, rapid analysis, and research on disinformation campaigns, as well as specific media literacy initiatives.

Considering the mission of EDMO, the work of the Taskforce did not focus on the security or foreign interference aspects of disinformation related to the war, but rather on understanding the phenomenon by focusing on the content circulating, examining the role of public interest journalism, and researching efforts to build resilience across societies.

A [report](#) on the work and discussions of the Taskforce over the past months was published at the end of June 2022. The report includes 10 key recommendations to further support the fight against disinformation and counter respective challenges.

Since the outbreak of the conflict on 24 February 2022, EDMO had already created a [repository](#) dedicated to collecting the most relevant articles published by its fact-checking network to detect and debunk disinformation on the war in Ukraine. The repository is accessible on a dedicated webpage “[War in Ukraine: The fact-checked disinformation detected in the EU](#)”. Users can read and explore them through filtered search. Since March 2022, [Periodic insights and early warnings](#) on the main trends and disinformation narratives resulting from the fact-checking articles repository have also been developed by the EDMO team and are available on the EDMO website.







2. Task II

2.1 Executive Summary

EUI-STG has been responsible for the set-up of the EDMO Governance Body which is composed of two boards: the Executive Board (EB), whose members represent the various pillars of activities of EDMO, and the Advisory Board (AB), composed of a multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder group of experts in the field of online disinformation and media. Details on the composition of both boards as well as the Charter of the Governance Body are accessible on a [dedicated webpage](#).

During the last year, the main developments within the Governance Body are related to the management and coordination of activities carried out by the two Boards. The main mission of EDMO's governance body is to ensure public trust regarding the work of EDMO, define and oversee EDMO's strategy, set EDMO's research agenda, and establish a framework to provide secure access to online platforms' data for research purposes.

2.2 Activities

2.2.1 Description of EDMO's Governance Body

The Executive Board has an operational and implementation role and can count on the advice of an Advisory Board, a larger composition that includes various renowned experts in the field. In order to ensure harmonisation, coordination, and implementation of the tasks, Paula Gori acts as Secretary General of the overall independent body.

The Advisory Board is chaired by Prof. Madeleine de Cock Buning, of the School of Transnational Governance at the EUI. During the past year, the composition of the board saw some changes. While Claire Wardle, Adam Thomas, and Grégoire Lemarchand could not continue to contribute to EDMO in their quality of advisory board members, Kalina Bontcheva (University of Sheffield) and Radovan Geist (EURACTIV Slovakia) joined the Advisory Board in July 2021 and of Clare Melford (Global Disinformation Index, GDI) in January 2022.

In the course of the last year, among others, the Advisory Board has contributed to three important documents in order to set EDMO's [vision and mission](#), EDMO's [scientific focus](#), and Guiding principles for relations with donors and external funds. During the past year, EDMO Advisory Board has met on a monthly basis. While meetings have been held online so far, the board will gather at the EUI premises in Florence at the beginning of July 2022.

The Executive Board is chaired by Prof. Miguel Poiarés Maduro of the School of Transnational Governance at the EUI and is composed of the leaders of the different tasks of EDMO, also representing the members of the EDMO consortium. The Executive Board meets once a month. It





ensures proper implementation of the EDMO activities and takes operational decisions in the interest of the mission of EDMO.

Communication between the two boards is key to making sure that policies and their application are successful in light of the objectives of the Observatory. Members of the Executive Board communicate at two main levels: with the Advisory Board and with the team members of the task they represent. This is ensured thanks to the Secretary General as well as within the overall project management coordinated by the EUI-STG. Between March 2021 and May 2022, the Executive Board continued to meet on a monthly basis online and was able to gather in person twice in the context of the Meeting with the EDMO Hubs in Florence, respectively on 7 September 2021 and on 15 March 2022.

2.2.2 Independent advisory role to the European Media and Information Fund

The [European Media and Information Fund](#) (EMIF) is a joint initiative of the Gulbenkian Foundation and the European University Institute, providing grants on a competitive basis to support media literacy and fact-checking initiatives, as well as research projects on online disinformation. EDMO's governance body has accepted to have an independent advisory role towards the Fund upon the condition of independence of the fund and its engagement towards developing a multi-donor structure. EDMO's governance body reserves itself the right to re-evaluate this collaboration. EDMO's [Scientific Focus](#) acts as a framework to guide the scientific priorities of EMIF's interventions. Moreover, in its quality of independent advisor to EMIF, EDMO's Advisory Board sets the scientific priorities for EMIF's annual interventions in funding "Multidisciplinary investigations on Disinformation", "Research – Studies & Sandboxes", and "Actions in support of Media Literacy" through its [Scientific Guidance on the yearly calls](#).

EDMO has triggered the creation of [EDMO's Working Group on Access to Platform Data](#). The Working Group – composed of twelve representatives from academia, civil society, and several technology companies – is chaired by Dr. Rebekah Tromble, Member of the EDMO Advisory Board and Director of the Institute for Data, Democracy & Politics (IDDP) at George Washington University. The group has been tasked in 2021 to draft a Code of Conduct on access to platform data under Article 40 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The aim of the working group has been to clarify how digital media platforms may provide independent researchers with access to data in a GDPR-compliant manner. This would allow independent researchers to provide a better understanding to the public of online disinformation and other phenomena that impact platform users and societies.

On 31 May 2022, the working group released the Report on researchers' access to platform data including a [draft Code of Conduct](#) on how platforms can share data with independent researchers





while protecting users' rights. The report was presented and symbolically handed to the cabinet of the European Commission Vice-President for Values and Transparency Věra Jourová on 13 June during the EDMO 2022 Annual Conference.



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3. Task III

3.1 Executive Summary

Task III is coordinated by Pagella Politica (PP) and implemented in collaboration with the Athens Technology Center (ATC) and its subcontractor Deutsche Welle (DW) and with EUI-STG for media literacy. The Task consists in supporting and coordinating independent fact-checking activities in Europe, including i) the mapping of fact-checking activities in Europe, ii) the creation of searchable directories aggregating fact-checks and media literacy material from external repositories and iii) the fostering of joint fact-checking activities and exchange of best practices.

One of the most relevant results is the creation of a solid network of European fact-checking organisations that during the pandemic and the Ukraine war produced briefs and investigations. The briefs helped in giving a snapshot of the circulation of disinformation in Europe every month. Collective investigations tackled various aspects of disinformation, helping the understanding and the contrast of some dangerous false narratives. During the Ukraine war, the EDMO fact-checking network's operations were of paramount importance in creating a database of the fact-checking materials published, which has been used as a base for different analyses of the ongoing disinformation (i.e., weekly insights, dedicated investigations, contribution to the EDMO's Ukraine Taskforce's work).

3.2 Activities

3.2.1 Cooperative fact-checking content

After the successful onboarding procedure of European Fact-checkers into the EDMO community, its project infrastructure is effectively in use by the network. The preparatory work towards this objective has consisted in the building of a digital community of fact-checkers to join EDMO and actively take part in joint investigative work.

The network currently consists of 33 organizations from 26 different European countries (plus Norway). The onboarding process is still ongoing, with new organizations expressing interest in joining the network on a regular basis. Every member State of the Union is currently represented with the exceptions of Cyprus and Malta. Representatives from Pagella Politica are carrying out outreach activities in order to include projects from those countries too, if existing.

Out of this EDMO fact-checking community, various public outputs are being produced. These cooperative contents consist of monthly briefs summarizing the situation of disinformation in Europe during the preceding month, as well as collaborative investigations providing a deep insight into specific topics most affected by the disinformation phenomenon.



The basic idea behind the monthly briefs is to provide an overarching overview of the developments of disinformation and of the fact-checking activities at the European level. This information, in turn, fosters a regular exchange of information among fact-checkers and collaboration among the network members.

A questionnaire is sent to all organizations at the beginning of each month asking for relevant data, such as:

- share of Covid-19 disinformation and, since March 2022, also the allocation of fake news related to the war between Russia and Ukraine as a portion of the total;
- false news with the widest circulation or impact at the national level;
- most significant verified information;
- top false news circulating within each member country.

Pagella Politica's staff sends the questionnaires, elicits answers where needed, and finally collects, analyses, and summarizes the information. A specific graphic template has been created by Pagella Politica's team for this aim. A semi-final version of the brief is then shared with the Executive Board in order to collect feedback and comments. Finally, the [brief](#) is published on the EDMO homepage and disseminated via social media platforms, both by the project's accounts and by the other partners. Specific actions are taken in order to encourage further dissemination by the members of the networks (tags, retweets, mentions, etc.). Up to the end of May 2022, EDMO published eleven monthly briefs.

3.2.1.2 Collaborative Investigations

The [collaborative investigations](#) can be initiated directly by the network organizations or encouraged by the EDMO consortium. By the end of April 2022, sixteen investigations have been created by the joint community and published on the EDMO homepage. Some examples follow to demonstrate the wide-ranging topics of investigations and the wide participation of the EDMO network:

- The first collaborative investigation, published in September 2021, tackled the disinformation about the situation in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the US and allies. Nine organizations from five different EU countries participated.
- In November 2021, the EDMO network produced an investigation that looked into the use of miscaptioned and de-contextualized old images to portray non-existing huge protests against Covid-19-related measures. Nine organizations from eight different EU countries participated.
- Another recent investigation was published on the 30th of March 2022, showing how Covid-19 conspiracy theorists pivoted to pro-Russia hoaxes. Eight organizations from seven different EU countries participated.





Training sessions on the use of the collaborative verification platform Truly Media were offered to the network in September 2021 and February 2022, including the announcement of a contest to display the best output; a reward of 1,000 EUR is offered to the best work at the end of every quarter.

3.2.1.3 Publications of the Taskforce

In the context of the work of the [*Taskforce on Disinformation and the War in Ukraine*](#) (see 1.2.7) including supporting the understanding of main disinformation trends during the conflict, collaboration with all relevant fact-checking actors across Europe was established, leveraging the EDMO network to quickly identify and understand misleading or false information narratives.

As of the end of March 2022, the Taskforce created a regularly updated list of all the articles written by the various members of the network regarding disinformation spotted and debunked since the beginning of the war. Additionally, the Taskforce created a guide on how to avoid false and misleading news in order to increase public awareness of the disinformation phenomenon.

The fact-checking team of the Taskforce published three statements focusing on specific issues during the war: The first statement spotted and revealed false fact-checking sites which are actually Russian propaganda. Secondly, the devoted team of the Taskforce informed about the risk of cyberattacks by which EDMO itself was affected shortly after becoming increasingly engaged in the war-related disinformation. The third statement advises on how to avoid secondary trauma, addressing in particular journalists and researchers who are engaged in the war.

As part of the fact-checking coordinating effort, the EDMO consortium also decided, in addition to the monthly published briefs, to add a weekly insight focused on the crisis in Ukraine, which is being produced in close cooperation between EUI and Pagella Politica. The insight results in a synthesis depicting the current situation of disinformation in the war, extracted from the collective and constantly updated article list. These insights also include early warning signs of major false news and disinformation narratives to be expected in the near future. In general, this tragic political situation resulted also in a push in the communication within the EDMO network and in a boost of collaborative work.

The current war in Ukraine created a new line of activity in the EDMO project which will continue in the future. All above-mentioned collaborative contents will most likely continue throughout the end of the project, in order to show the cooperative nature of the fact-checking efforts at the European level. The main key for all these joint outputs is the constantly increasing exchange of experts' opinions, information, and contents within the still-growing EDMO network. In the future, this communicative trade-off will be continuously intensified to keep on strengthening the network and to give publicity to the project activities at the European as well as at the national level.





Fact-checking is a key element in the collaboration with the Hubs. Preliminary meetings have been held in order to inform the Hubs about the work carried out at the EDMO level. In particular, the EDMO Hubs are now receiving the briefs on disinformation created by EDMO's fact-checking network, so that they can translate and/or disseminate them at a national level. In the near future, the expectation is to strengthen the exchange of published content, research, best practices, and early warnings about surging disinformation narratives with the Hubs. Cooperation at the national level also gave new momentum to the onboarding of fact-checking organizations in the EDMO fact-checking network (es. from NORDIS, Faktisk, and TjekDet; from BENEDMO Factcheck Vlaanderen). In general, the EDMO network could be leveraged also, in the long run, to quickly spot false information narratives and to produce warnings for media outlets across Europe about upcoming false narratives, in order to counter their spreading as soon as possible.

The published collaborative contents are available on the [EDMO homepage](#) and promoted on various social media platforms. Overall, the monthly briefs have received good attention and appreciation among the public in general, and among the European community and disinformation stakeholders in particular.

3.2.2 Organization of 2 conferences between European fact-checkers and stakeholders

Pagella Politica was responsible for organizing two international conferences/seminars with the purpose of bringing together the European fact-checking community and other relevant stakeholders. The focus of one conference was social media regulations while the other focused more national debunking studies and media literacy. Both events also highlighted the relevance of fruitful cooperation among fact-checkers.

Considering the pandemic situation and at the same time aiming for greater reach and impact, the first conference took place online on June 8, 2021, in the context of the EDMO week (7-11 June). The international seminar for fact-checkers took place that morning, to precede and introduce the EDMO week afternoon session dedicated to fact-checking. Fact-checking organizations from different European countries (Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy, and Spain) were invited to contribute to the discussion by providing practical examples of instances in which transnational cooperation among fact-checkers proved to be the key strategy for increasing the reach and impact of their work. Title, concept note, and speakers of the first event were as follows:

Title: “Stronger together: Why cooperation among fact-checkers is essential”.

Concept note: *Why do we need cooperation among fact-checkers? First, because we can better understand and address cross-national disinformation if fact-checkers work together in international networks. But also because politicians often exploit the lack of knowledge in their national audiences about what is happening in other countries. Moreover, because an ecosystem of small fact-checking organizations has all the means necessary to fight such a big enemy as disinformation,*





especially if state-driven or spread by big media outlets. During this event all these aspects, and more, will be discussed by journalists and fact-checkers with a practical approach, giving examples of international and bilateral cooperation. From the previous experience of the SOMA project to the future possibilities of EDMO, from the intense but yet non-organized cooperation among European fact-checkers today to an easier and more structured future, the whole discussion is aimed to give ideas and propose solutions for the next years of cooperative fact-checking in the EU.

Speakers: Giovanni Zagni, Tommaso Canetta, Carlo Canepa and Laura Loguercio (Pagella Politica/EDMO); Clara Jiménez Cruz (Maldita); Alice Echtermann (Correctiv); Thanos Sitistas (Ellinika Hoaxes); Eva Wackenreuther (Fakt ist Fakt/AFP).

The event was attended by 27 participants, including representatives of other European fact-checking organizations, academics, media professionals, members of EU institutions, and other stakeholders. At the end of the presentations, a Q&A session provided participants the opportunity to ask questions to the speakers and moderators. Several issues were raised during the question time, including a constructive discussion of what a "model for collaboration" could look like, starting with defining what exactly it is that fact-checkers need. The participants also shared opinions about what EDMO and fact-checkers, in general, could learn from past projects, researchers, literacy specialists, and educators. It was concluded that fact-checking activities need to evolve in order to gain more impact and develop a more sustainable business model.

Due to the less restrictive pandemic situation, the second event took place in person, in Milan, on April 29, 2022. It was a full-day conference gathering approximately 50 to 60 fact-checkers, researchers, members of the EDMO consortium, and other stakeholders from all over Europe, under the following title and concept note:

Title: Fact-checking and European Answers to the Disinformation Crisis: Cooperation, Policy, Media literacy

Concept Note: *EDMO's fact-checking network was established in the summer of 2021 and in less than one year of activity proved its relevance in tackling disinformation at the European level through many different tools and activities – at the beginning mostly about the pandemic and now about the war in Ukraine. But the whole European fact-checking environment is undergoing a fast evolution, with a strong involvement in discussions about European policies with platforms and institutions, the birth and implementation of the EDMO national and regional Hubs, and a number of activities carried out at central and national level about media literacy and political fact-checking. This event is the occasion to share what has been done until now, to foster an even stricter partnership among the different players of the fact-checking community and other interested parties, and to reflect about the next steps ahead.*

Speakers: Giovanni Zagni, Tommaso Canetta (Pagella Politica/EDMO); Gustavo Sampaio (Poligrafo); Tania Roettger (Correctiv); Sami Acef (AFP); Elda Brogi (EUI); Carlos Hernández-Echevarría (Maldita.es); Alberto Rabbachin (European Commission); Gabriele Giampieri (Spotted);





Solve Kuraas Karlsen (Faktisk); Lorenzo Marini (Verificat); Thomas Hedin (NORDIS); Gianni Riotta (IDMO); Kirsty Park (EDMO Ireland); Trisha Meyer (BELUX); Clara González Tosat (IBERIFIER); Adriana Dergam (CEDMO); Jocelyne Zablitz (DE FACTO); TBD (BENEDMO)

Both events organized by Pagella Politica in the context of EDMO showed the common ambitions and objectives in the community, to change the perspective of media consumption creating a safe environment for all the diverse audiences (in terms of age, media literacy, income, education etc.) exposed to disinformation. It can be safely concluded that these events boosted the creation of an enriched and better-connected network of fact-checkers in Europe, who are increasingly able to collaborate more effectively towards their common goals. Those goals are especially important given the different crises sadly experienced globally over the last few years. Therefore, it is crucial to keep the network connected and active also in the future.

3.2.3 Mapping fact-checking activities in Europe

Europe's investigative journalists and open-source intelligence (OSINT) experts work tirelessly to dissect false claims or manipulated photos and videos. They do important groundwork for a functioning democratic media landscape, and their job would benefit from more recognition, exposure, and networking.

The EDMO [repository](#) of fact-checking activities continues to provide a comprehensive "map" of initiatives and organizations that meet the following criteria:

- Focus on fact-checking, verification, or open-source intelligence (OSINT);
- Stories/posts/explainers etc. are digitally accessible to the public;
- The creators are based in one of the 27 member states of the EU (or in the UK, which was still a part of the Union when EDMO was conceived).

Deutsche Welle (DW), operating under a subcontract with ATC, is in charge of the mapping process. This currently means updating and maintaining what has become a very comprehensive list of European fact-checking organizations (incl. links to their resources and remarks on their professional characteristics).

The EDMO consortium and DW have so far created:

- an [actual map](#) (responsive, interactive, zoomable, shareable) that serves as an eyecatcher and overview on the EDMO site;
- a table (responsive, searchable, sortable, shareable) that provides extended information on projects/organizations;
- an editorial section (responsive, searchable, shareable) that provides short portraits of featured organizations.





The technical backend looks as follows:

- collaborative, "living" spreadsheets (in this case: Google sheets) that can be turned into CSV files;
- a web-based data visualization tool (in this case: Datawrapper) that can turn long rows of names, numbers, and locations into more accessible, compelling forms of information;
- embeddable and shareable maps and charts, i.e.: data/data visualizations that can easily be published on the EDMO website (or elsewhere) via code snippets and also be shared on social media.

To find the information/data needed for the "map", DW has carried out and will continue to do extensive internet research. This includes:

- using all sorts of search engines (and search parameters) for the open web;
- diving into the most important social media platforms (particularly Facebook and LinkedIn);
- sending out a comprehensive online questionnaire to fact-checking organizations (to gather information directly);
- communicating with a large number of stakeholders, primarily via email (long-term correspondence).

The repository will continue to be updated with new information and fact-checking initiatives, while more short portraits will be added in the editorial section.

As for the outcome and impact, the EDMO repository has so far been:

- Edited, updated, and extended more than a dozen times since its initial release in March 2021;
- Visited and consulted by a large number of MIL people, researchers, journalists, and citizens from all over the world (more than 2.800 page views since March 2021);
- Frequently shared/cited across social media platforms and fact-checking networks.

3.2.4 Connecting external repositories of relevant online fact-checks and media literacy material

In the framework of this activity, ATC is responsible for aggregating content from external repositories of relevant online fact-checks and media literacy material. A set of fact-checking sources (most of them are signatories of the International Fact-Checking Network) has been selected and content from those sources is aggregated and presented on the platform.

The search tool allows users to enter a keyword and explore fact-checks from a variety of sources inside the platform. The user can see the title, a short preview of each fact-check, the source of the fact-check, and the date of publication. By clicking on each fact-check the user is then directed to the website where each fact-check is published. Automatic translation has been integrated into the repository allowing for the translation of the content from and to the official European languages.





The repository of fact-checks is a dynamic repository that retrieves fact-checking content from different sources based on the user's search terms.

Due to Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) considerations, only content from fact-checking sources that provide an RSS feed is ingested, while ATC doesn't index the complete fact-check (as mentioned above, the user can see the title, a short preview of each fact-check, the source of the fact-check, the date of publication, and the URL). This has some effects in terms of usability. Moreover, the repository is not fully searchable, since ATC – due to IPR considerations – does not index the whole text included in a fact-check.

Due to the above-mentioned restrictions, it was decided that an additional searchable archive will be created, initially accessible solely within EDMO's platform, which will allow platform users to browse through, search, translate, and export the fact-checks produced by all the EDMO Hubs. ATC will index the fact-checks coming from the EDMO Hubs and will store and make them searchable to the members of EDMO's communities for fact-checking and research purposes. Work for creating the EDMO Hubs' fact-checks archive has already started.

The release of a publicly available, searchable repository containing all the fact-checks published by the EDMO Hubs is expected to have a major impact both on research and on fact-checking activities. The repository will allow fact-checkers and researchers to browse through a large number of fact-checks produced by many fact-checking organisations across Europe and to filter and search the contents based on keywords and other search parameters. Such a repository will allow fact-checkers to get a quick look at what is published by fellow organisations on a daily basis through a central point of access, while it will help them to avoid double work by pointing them to already debunked claims that might circulate again in a different country or in a slightly modified way. The repository will also allow researchers to study and analyse better and more efficiently the disinformation phenomenon through access to numerous fact-checks across Europe. The contents will be exportable to a CSV format to facilitate the analysis.

Regarding the media literacy repository and as part of EDMO's work to map the media literacy landscape in Europe, EUI-STG is in the process of compiling the following resources: i) Europe-wide stakeholder mapping; ii) Country profiles detailing the status of media literacy in each EU member state; iii) Media literacy initiatives that provide examples of good practices. In collaboration with Emma Goodman, EUI-STG is working on collecting the relevant material. A webpage dedicated to country profiles for each Member State will soon be available^F. It will offer an overview of media literacy initiatives in each country, along with details about any national policies or frameworks, information about key stakeholders, and the status of media literacy in the national curriculum and outside formal education. Information regarding media literacy activities of the EDMO national hubs will also be included. The webpage with the repository of country profile will be periodically updated,





with more stakeholders and featured projects to be included as well as additional member states to be added regularly.

To advance the work of EDMO in the field of media literacy, the report “[Media literacy in Europe and the role of EDMO](#)” was presented and approved by the EDMO Advisory Board in October 2021 and it is now available on the EDMO website. The report aimed to delineate the best strategy for EDMO’s work on Media Literacy. On this basis, EDMO has further populated the [Media Literacy section](#) of the website and developed new webpages. Further and in the context of the current conflict in Ukraine, EDMO triggered a call for information on media literacy initiatives in place to counter disinformation around the war in Ukraine. In this regard, a [short analysis by Prof. Sonia Livingstone](#) of the mapped initiatives is available on the EDMO website. The article highlights uneven but promising initiatives and underlines the need for strengthened media literacy efforts to overcome future challenges. Following the two sessions of the training “[Evaluating the impact of Media Literacy initiatives](#)” organised on 24-25 March 2022 and 26-27 April, a tool section will be created on the media literacy webpage. This public available section will propose short videos of the trainings with the best practices proposed by the trainers to conduct evaluation of media literacy initiatives.

Establishing a strong dialogue with the EDMO Hubs on media literacy is also part of the strategy to develop and improve repositories. To this end, on 28 October 2021 the Workshop “United against disinformation: EDMO’s work on media literacy” was organised as part of European Media Literacy Week inviting the EDMO Hubs to present their strategy in the field and how they plan to contribute to EDMO’s media literacy efforts. Additionally, an operational “Workshop with the EDMO Hubs on Media and Information Literacy” was held online on 1 March 2022 between EDMO central and the Hubs’ media literacy experts to further advance the collaboration in this field. Furthermore, in the 2020 winter EDMO joined the Media Literacy Expert Group as an observer and is regularly participating in their meetings. Finally, in collaboration with the Media & Learning Association, a series of online seminars “[Exploring Media Literacy at National, Regional and Local Level – the work of EDMO Hubs on Media Literacy](#)” is being organised to explore the work of the EDMO Hubs on Media Literacy. The three sessions will take place in Autumn 2022: BELUX, IDMO and Ireland Hub will present their work on 14 September, CEDMO and NORDIS on 12 October, De Facto, Iberifier and BENEDMO on 16 November.



4. Task IV

4.1 Executive Summary

Task IV is coordinated by the research center DATALAB – Center for Digital Social Research at Aarhus University. The resulting services were published on EDMO’s website. The Task aims at establishing the best possible foundation for conducting research on European disinformation and creating interdisciplinary collaborations among European researchers studying disinformation.

Two of the outputs from the past year have been the establishment and the updates of a comprehensive repository of academic literature studying European disinformation at scale, as well as a mapping of research organisations and institutions conducting this research.

4.2 Activities

4.2.1 Academic activities studying disinformation in the EU

DATALAB worked on a comprehensive mapping of European academic activities and publications studying digital disinformation from the perspective of multiple disciplines. Hereby, this supports the overall goal of Task IV carried out by the research team at DATALAB – Center for Digital Social Research, Aarhus University (Denmark), namely, to support and coordinate academic activities on disinformation in Europe. As will be described throughout the following subsections, the implemented activities related to this task. have laid the groundwork for i) the identification of relevant researchers, research institutions, and organisations, ii) the mapping of relevant academic activities in or focused on the EU, and iii) the creation of a publicly available repository of academic work on digital disinformation in the EU.

4.2.1.1 Designing a systematic literature search

A first step was to carefully define relevant search criteria to allow for the identification of relevant academic literature. The initial search criteria were research concerned with disinformation in digital media either in one or more EU member states and/or conducted by researchers affiliated with EU-based research institutions and organisations. Further, an objective of the search was to provide an overview of the overall patterns of digital disinformation in the EU. For this reason, a decision was made to focus on large-scale studies – i.e., studies of large datasets or interested in inferring findings to a wider population. In the initial search, it was also decided that research must be published in English to be considered, as English is the official language of EDMO, is spoken by the researchers responsible for the search, and, finally, it is the language that would make the initial repository easily accessible to a wide network of stakeholder.





The search results were accessed through the Royal Danish Library, which (in contrast to Google Scholar) allowed for the inclusion of all identified keywords. The keywords were carefully chosen and assigned to one of two categories: disinformation-related words, and country names. First, keywords related to digital disinformation had to be included in the title of the paper. The keywords were: conspiracies, conspiracy theory, conspiracy, disinformation, fake news, false information, hoax, information disorder, malinformation, and/or misinformation. Second, keywords containing names and relevant abbreviations of current and former member states of the EU were identified and could be included anywhere in the text. The keywords of this category were: Austria, Belgium, Britain, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Czechia, Denmark, England, Estonia, EU, Europe, Finland, France, GB, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK, United Kingdom, and Wales.

Finally, the search was set to include results from 2015 until the day of the search (i.e., 28 January 2021) as this timeframe encompasses important events such as the manipulation of information during the Ukraine crisis, the publication of this plan by the newly formed East StratCom Taskforce, the establishment of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) the Brexit referendum vote, and the 2016 US Presidential Campaign.

4.2.1.2 Filtering search results

The search resulted in 2,296 papers, proceedings, chapters, books, and reports which have all been filtered for relevance. This important work was carried out by researchers affiliated with EDMO. The relevance was assessed based on title, abstract, and, when necessary, full-text assessment. After removing duplicates and results that did not satisfy the search criteria, 93 papers remained. Information about these publications is all made publicly available on a Scientific Publications Repository on the EDMO website. An initial overview of the findings has been provided in an earlier EDMO report, equally available on the EDMO website.

4.2.1.3 Expanding the repository through engagement with partners of EDMO

To further expand the repository, research partners of the EDMO Hubs have been contacted and encouraged to recommend new publications on the topic of digital disinformation in the EU. To secure continuity in the work, a codebook and Excel file were provided describing the scope of the extended literature search in detail. In this second round of search for academic literature, the criteria were loosened to include papers published in languages other than English and research that was not at scale. The intention behind these changes is to achieve a more comprehensive mapping of relevant academic work focused on digital disinformation in the EU, by utilizing the great language resources in each national Hub associated with the observatory.



4.2.1.4 Academic dissemination of the approach

Additionally, the literature review also resulted in a review article currently under review in a scientific journal. The literature review article addresses the entries in the repository with a specific focus on data sources, themes, geographical coverage of research, country affiliation of researchers, and field of research. Overall, the results showed a great representation of research across academic fields and extensive collaboration between researchers across institutions, organizations, and country borders. Similarly, all EU member states have received some attention in research, although some countries are of course studied in greater detail (most notably Italy), whereas others have appeared only in cross-country studies (most notably Eastern European countries).

The literature search was the first activity in Task IV, and also served as basis for other activities. As already mentioned, EDMO is in the process of updating the repository by reaching out to affiliated partners. The goal is to achieve an even broader representation of academic contributions, allowing for a more comprehensive mapping of digital disinformation research in the EU.

With the establishment of the [Scientific Publications Repository](#), EDMO has created a great resource for researchers, policymakers, fact-checkers, and other stakeholders interested in digital disinformation research focused on or conducted within the EU. The positive impact is threefold: i) the repository facilitates easy access for researchers so that they may identify fellow researchers with similar research interests and hereby establish fruitful collaborations across disciplines and borders to provide an even stronger mapping of digital disinformation in the EU as a whole and/or specific member states in the future, ii) the repository adds to the visibility of studies focused on digital disinformation research at scale in the EU, and hereby strengthens this field of interest, and iii) it provides an overview of what has been studied at the present which makes it possible to identify current blind spots; for instance, understudied member states or platforms as well as interesting research questions to be explored with different samples.

4.2.2 List of relevant academic institutions and organisations

The purpose was to provide researchers and other stakeholders with an overview of the academic organisations and institutions studying disinformation, which in turn can foster interdisciplinary and international collaborations. The report “IV.D.B List of relevant academic institutions and organisations” provided a basis for fostering future EDMO activities and collaborations. The identification of relevant academic institutions and organisations related to digital disinformation research has two pillars.

In the first pillar, information from the repository of scientific articles established was extracted. In the second pillar, a survey in January 2022 to engage with the research community and to map the relevant academic institutions and appropriate independent organisations in the EU was conducted.





This pillar also builds on the previously described academic activities studying disinformation in the EU .

The constructed survey covers aspects such as experience with disinformation research, known projects, institutions and organisations within the field, academic background and collaborations, link to fact-checking organisations, and interest in EDMO as well as ways in which EDMO can assist research.

Participants of the survey were identified through the repository mentioned above by contacting all authors of the included publications, if a contact email address was provided. Researchers whose studies have been published in peer-reviewed publications were considered to be experts within their field. Therefore, these researchers were contacted to use the snowball method in order to extend the list of organisations and institutions that are relevant to disinformation research in the EU. Researchers were asked, as part of the questionnaire, to list all projects, organisations, and institutions dealing with disinformation that they considered relevant to the field. In addition to the recipients identified through the repository , researchers from the EDMO Hubs – EDMO Ireland, BENEDMO, CEDMO, IBERIFIER, EDMO BELUX, NORDIS, DeFacto, IDMO – were also invited. The researchers were mainly contacted to extend the list of relevant institutions; however, the survey also covered more topics such as research focus and asked the researcher about their research linked to fact-checking organisations. The researchers were also asked to comment on how EDMO could be improved. The survey was sent out in December 2021, and two reminders were sent out in January 2022. Of the total of 212 researchers invited to the survey, 44 participated.

The survey covered several aspects of research on disinformation within Europe, showing that research foci and topics, as well as methods, widely vary. The results can be used as a starting point to address researchers' needs within EDMO, to identify common interests and methods, and to foster collaboration. From the 44 replies, a total of 251 organisations and institutions were extracted, with 177 of them based in the EU. The 251 identified organisations and institutions were compiled to a list that consists of the identified institution, the country of the institution, a URL to the institution's website, the source for the identification (survey versus repository or extracted from both), the discipline, and the number of appearances within the survey/repository and the region (distinguished: EU, non-EU countries, countries related to the EU: EAA, EFTA, and former EU countries). Even though the representation of the different countries is not evenly distributed, the approach has led to broad coverage of EU countries, with only seven not being represented. A more detailed description of the questionnaire and the procedure will be published on the EDMO website .

The DATALAB researchers are currently collaborating with ATC to publish a digital geographical map showing the placement of the organisations and institutions identified through the survey to visualise the most important findings and facilitate the search for relevant information. Along with this map, it will be possible to find links to the organisations/institutions as well as information on





the specific organisation's/institution's academic discipline and whether the organisation/institution has been found through the repository or survey. Extensions of the map will be considered in the future.

The findings of organisations and institutions will make collaborations in the research field of disinformation easier for researchers. Fostering and intensifying collaborations will most likely improve the quality of the research (Walter, Sørensen, Bechmann, 2020). Having a straightforward way to overview the different organisations and institutions will make interdisciplinary collaborations much more attainable.



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5. Task V

5.1 Executive Summary

EDMO's Task V aims to support policy activities in order to tackle the disinformation phenomenon, including the monitoring of the implementation of the Code of Practice on Disinformation by the relevant public authorities. The Task is led by the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF) at the European University Institute.

The main objectives of the Task are: i) as pointed out in the Code 2022, to closely work together with the Code's Signatories and the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) in the implementation phase and in the monitoring phase of the Code; ii) to support policy activities tackling disinformation: including providing key elements for continuous monitoring and independent assessment of the Code's impact on the disinformation phenomenon; iii) to follow the scholarly discourse and the policymaking process in member states, and to regularly report about the latest developments.

In particular, the objectives outlined above require the Task leader to cooperate with established EU observatories. Such cooperation allows a more efficient reporting on relevant trends in the online media ecosystem, it allows to better support public authorities (including ERGA, the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services), to monitor the impact of the Code, and to provide academic analysis that could be useful to policymakers on the national and EU levels on potential improvements to a broad regulatory framework, including self and co-regulation. Finally, the Task leader reports to the European Commission about the main trends and other key research findings relating to the disinformation phenomenon.

In the second year of its activities, EDMO's Task V entailed the development of a methodology for structural indicators assessing the impact of the Code of Practice on Disinformation. Reports that analysed national disinformation crises during local security emergencies (i.e., currently, the war in Ukraine all across Europe) were also developed. In addition, the work around Task V included the publication of research papers on issue-based advertising and case law on disinformation, an analysis of national policies related to disinformation, and the relative reporting of the signatory online platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic.



5.2.1 Definition of the standards for platforms' reporting on the Code of Practice - Development of Structural Indicators

The European Commission envisioned in its Guidance on Strengthening the Code of Practice on Disinformation (CoP) that the future Code should be accompanied by structural indicators that can help to “effectively measure the overall impact of the CoP on the disinformation phenomenon” online and the disinformation phenomenon online itself.

Understanding that this is a task that requires the collaboration of different stakeholders in developing, testing, and adjusting structural indicators, the Code of Practice 2022 highlights that “within the first year of the Code’s operations, Relevant Signatories will work together with the Task-force as well as with EDMO, ERGA, and relevant third-party experts to develop a first set of Structural Indicators that can help assess the impact and success of the Code.” Thus, Task V will propose an initial set of such indicators that can be implemented and tested at relatively short notice, and thus serve as an initial step towards developing a stable set of effective structural indicators. As this exercise is initiated within the broad framework of strengthening the Code of Practice on Disinformation, it builds up on the definitions and considers certain measures contained in the CoP and relevant EC documents. The first proposal aims at setting the scene for an advanced methodology, which should be developed in cooperation with a wider array of stakeholders and experts. The process is envisaged as being made up of two key steps: i) provision of a set of initial indicators to start measuring the extent of the online disinformation phenomenon in the EU and its member states from a longitudinal perspective; ii) indicators should be further developed to measure the impact of the CoP.

In light of these necessary premises, the proposal developed by Task V was presented to a wide range of stakeholders, including the EDMO Hubs, as well as the EDMO Executive and Advisory Board and the European Commission. The task of preparing indicators for the CoP was publicly discussed at the EDMO week (7-11 June 2021). Two sessions, in particular, were relevant for this effort: On June 9, the side-event “Defining a methodology to assess the Code of Practice: challenges and proposals” with Elda Brogi, EDMO and European University Institute, Konrad Bleyer-Simon, EDMO & European University Institute, Eleonora Mazzoli, London School of Economics and Political Science, Paolo Cesarini, Teneo and formerly European Commission, Olaf Steenfadt, Reporters Without Borders, Francesco Sciacchitano, AGCOM (Italian Communications Regulatory Authority) and Pier Luigi Parcu, Center for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom; as well as the Thu 10 June session “Towards a new Code of Practice on Disinformation” with Miguel Poiars Maduro, EDMO and European University Institute, Krisztina Stump, European Commission, Elda Brogi, EDMO and European University Institute, Siada El Ramly, Dot.Europe, Lubos Kuklis, European Platform of Regulatory Authorities, Eliska Pirkova, Access Now, Nic Newman, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford, Sarah Andrew, AVAAZ and Erard Gilles, Association





of Commercial Television. The two workshops have, among others, looked at the various aspects and interests that need to be considered while developing a new Code, and the difficulties of developing a methodology for assessment in a situation in which the Code itself is constantly evolving.

Further discussions are planned with the Commission, ERGA, and other relevant stakeholders to improve the structural indicators (including in the context of the Code's Task-force). Once finalised, the structural indicators will serve as a tool to assess the impact of the Code of Practice on Disinformation.

5.2.2 Description and analysis of relevant emerging research topics

As part of the Task V effort, CMPF has finalized four papers, three of which can be accessed [here](#). These reports cover the definitions and policy challenges of “trustworthiness”, “issue-based advertising”, fighting disinformation during a national security emergency (Russian propaganda in the context of the war in Ukraine), and look at the relevant case law related to disinformation. A concise description of all four papers is provided below.

In the future, EDMO's Task V will continue to assess important research topics and is planning to organise further events to contribute to the international discourse on disinformation and platform regulation. The topics assessed in the research discuss issues that are in fact relevant for policymakers and scholars aiming at better understanding and tackling disinformation.

Trustworthiness

In the current online information environment, it has become increasingly complicated for users to define what information to trust. The amount of available content online exceeds the time and attention that users can invest in analysing what source is reliable and what is not. The report looks at a topic that, within many facets, is becoming increasingly relevant as an element of present and future media policy. Individual choices are driven both by technology-based and policy-based curation, which can limit human autonomy and freedom of choice. ‘Trustworthiness’ is explicitly mentioned in two pillars of the 2018 Code (A - scrutiny of ad placements and D – empowering consumers). The European Commission is therefore looking for indicators of trustworthiness that can provide the basis for platforms for improving the findability of trustworthy content sources and for ‘diluting’ the visibility (downranking) of their non-trustworthy counterparts. These indicators of trustworthiness should be based on objective criteria and endorsed by news media associations, in line with journalistic principles and processes. The report looks at four prominent projects that are often mentioned in the context of defining online content's trustworthiness in the EU: The Trust Project, the Credibility Coalition, the Journalism Trust Initiative and the NewsGuard browser extension. We provided an overview of indicators identified, and we found that it is, for example, a common property of these projects that they look at trustworthiness as a requirement that is attached to the content creator,





rather than to the content itself; moreover, they treat trustworthiness mainly as a requirement that is especially attached to news outlets, among possible content creators. While linking trustworthiness to content creators is indeed the best way to provide the basis for ex ante measures, the current focus on news media only allows for a narrow application.

Issue-based advertising

This is a form of paid-for advertising which advocates for broad political and legislative issues rather than specific candidates or political parties. It is a relevant problem when it comes to regulating the online environment. Platforms provide politically motivated actors with the opportunity to make use of a large amount of personal data and micro-target advertising. Many of these advertisements are paid for or run by actors with no formal political affiliation. To better understand who caters to what kinds of messages with potentially political goals and to which audiences, meaningful transparency should be required from both advertisers and online platforms. This is highlighted in the Code of Practice on Disinformation, but issue-based advertising is left undefined. Instead, the text requires signatories to elaborate their own definitions.

Relying on signatories' self-reports, press releases, and content policy explanations, this report maps the terminology and descriptions used by signatories and the European Commission. As the analysis shows, each signatory approaches issue-based advertising differently. Even more problematically, what they mean by the term and how they operationalise it in their policies, is rarely defined.

Case law for policy making

This report offers an overview of the principles of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) when countering disinformation. In the last few years, multiple EU and national authorities developed policies aimed at tackling the phenomena of disinformation, misinformation, and manipulation online. Among these policies, the 2018 Code of Practice on Disinformation issued by the European Commission, a self-regulatory tool signed by a number of online players (i.e., online platforms, relevant advertising groups), is one of the most noteworthy. The Preamble to the Code mentions that all the measures envisaged should apply within the framework of “the case law of the European Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) on the proportionality of measures designed to limit access to and circulation of harmful content”. The assessment shows that lessons can be drawn from the ECtHR approach to harmful or false speech, allowing governments to create or develop the existing policies from an advanced point of reasoning on the speech and expression dynamics in a democratic society, beginning on a case-by-case evaluation.



Information is a key component of hybrid warfare. To counter Russian war propaganda and disinformation, the European Union and the United Kingdom have taken the decision of banning Russia's international outlets. These measures, however, are not without controversy, as they raise concerns related to media freedom and possible loopholes that would render the efforts ineffective. In this report, the primary focus was the legal justification of both the EU and the UK measures, to what extent media outlets can be considered tools of information warfare, and the most important arguments both for and against a ban of propaganda outlets at times of an international crisis.

To discuss additional relevant research topics, EDMO organised an online event on the “media exemption” proposal to the DSA on 22 November 2021, 14.30-16.30. Speakers: Maja Cappello | European Audiovisual Observatory and EDMO Advisory Board, Lubos Kuklis | ERGA and EPRA, Wouter Gekiere | European Broadcasting Union, Siada El Ramly | DOT Europe, Renate Schroeder | European Federation of Journalists, Wout van Wijk | News Media Europe, Tommaso Canetta | Pagella Politica, Manfred Protze | German Press Council, Iva Nenadic | European University Institute, EDMO Policy Research and Analysis, Adeline Hulin | UNESCO, Martin Husovec | London School of Economics and Political Science, Beata Klimkiewicz | Jagiellonian University, Maria Luisa Stasi | ARTICLE 19. The workshop looked at a relevant and widely debated research and policy topic in relation to the Digital Services Act (DSA).

This long-awaited legislative proposal is expected to establish a transparency and accountability framework in particular for very large online platforms, but one of its contested aspects is its notice-and-action mechanism, which empowers platforms to make decisions about the legality of content upon receipt of a substantiated notice of alleged illegality. The amendments to the DSA proposal brought forward by the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT), and Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI) have sparked a lively debate on the need to protect media freedom from platform supervision and the potential consequences of such an exemption, also considering the difficulty of defining “media” in the digital age. In the workshop, the objective was to discuss this proposal and the different positions towards it: on the one hand, the concern around platforms supervising media or deciding what counts as media considering the power disbalance between platforms and the media; on the other, the recognition of the role that media – intentionally or unintentionally – play in the spread of disinformation and potentially illegal content. A recording is available [here](#).

5.2.3 Report on main trends and legal developments at national level on disinformation and national policies during the electoral campaigns

The activity aims to assess the latest developments in EU member states, in relation to disinformation and policies made to tackle the problems it causes. It looks mainly at countries that have or had





elections in the period covered, but measures related to COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine are also relevant.

Task V published a report about disinformation policies and legal developments in EU member states. Another report has already been finalised at the time of writing but has not yet published. In its assessment and overview, Task V relied on the findings of the latest iteration of the Media Pluralism Monitor (a project by the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, leader of this Task) that assesses the risks to media pluralism in member states and candidates, as well as on reports by the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) and other authoritative sources related to disinformation policies in the EU or member states. While the original intent of this deliverable was to assess laws and policies in relation to elections, the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing “infodemic” provided another relevant trigger for disinformation-related policymaking that cannot be disregarded in the analysis. After providing a European overview, the first report zoomed in on 7 European countries: France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain. The assessment was published in December 2021. A second report focusing on Bulgaria, France, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, and Slovakia will be published soon.

EDMO’s Task V will continue assessing disinformation policies in member states. In addition, EDMO will coordinate with EDMO Hubs to gain a more complete picture of the measures taken at the country level.

The topics assessed in the research discuss issues that are relevant for policymakers and scholars aiming at better understanding and tackling disinformation. They allow them to gain a better picture of the current developments on the ground and look at the issues through a comparative lens.

5.2.4 Assessment on the Code implementation, based on the standards and report to the EC

This deliverable intends to assess whether signatories successfully applied the measures recommended by the Code, by assessing the reports that were made available by the signatories themselves.

While the original intention of the European approach to regulation of disinformation was to develop laws and policies related to elections, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an additional set of challenges. The online platforms have thus submitted monthly self-reports to show how they were fighting disinformation and increasing the prominence of authoritative information in the context of the pandemic and the “infodemic”

The assessment was published in December 2021. The analysis of 57 so-called “Covid-19 Reports” from Facebook (11), Google (11), Microsoft (11), Mozilla (2), TikTok (11), and Twitter (11), produced between August 2020 and June 2021 as part of the “Fighting COVID-19 Disinformation Monitoring





Programme", revealed fundamental shortcomings in the processes of self-regulation, as well as transparency problems in the reporting system itself, showing that regulation, standardisation, and transparency need to be understood in EDMO's new communications order with an approach that is both new and different. The analysis concludes with 14 recommendations.

Once new reports are available and new reporting requirements are introduced that make an assessment of compliance worthy of research, the CMPF will conduct new assessments.

The assessment of platforms' reporting enables stakeholders, such as the Commission, the research community, and civil society, to better understand the ways in which platforms applied the commitments of the Code of Practice. As such, it plays a key role in the development of the new Code and the Key Performance Indicators that can enable future assessment by researchers and the policy community.



Conclusions

This report described the second year of operations (i.e., between May 2021 and May 2022) of the European Digital Media Observatory, linking such a period with the first year and with future developments of the projects. It was drafted by the four partners of the EDMO consortium – the European University Institute, with both the School of Transnational Governance (STG) and the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF), the Athens Technology Center (ATC), Aarhus University (in particular DATALAB – Center for Digital Social Research) and Pagella Politica (PP) – which illustrated their work Task-by-Task.

Task I aims at setting up a secure online collaborative platform – Truly Media – for fact-checkers and researchers supporting the analysis of disinformation campaigns and a web portal providing public information to raise awareness about disinformation. Contextually to these goals, the organization of events and trainings and outreach to the public also fall under Task I. The Athens Technology Center is responsible for operating Truly Media and EDMO's website and, in parallel, for updating the websites and their functionalities. A relevant example of the latter is the translation capability, which allows users to translate fact-checked content from and to English. It is the European University Institute that, through the School of Transnational Governance, is responsible for training and outreach activities. Such efforts – most notably, the organization of several trainings and events including the two Annual Conferences– strengthened the relationships between EDMO and relevant stakeholders in the field, favoured the dissemination of the project's main outcomes and ongoing activities, and provided educational opportunities to the public.

Task II was concerned with creating a governance body ensuring public trust in the work of the platform and establishing a framework to provide secure access to data of online platforms for research purposes. Already in the first year of operations, the School of Transnational Governance had set up the EDMO Governance Body, composed of two Boards. The Advisory Board is composed of multi-disciplinary experts steering the project vision mission and direction. The Executive Board, in turn, consists of the leaders of the different tasks of EDMO, also representing the members of the EDMO consortium. Harmonisation of the work of the two Boards is ensured by the Secretary General, Paula Gori. Between May 2021 and May 2022, the two Boards continued to oversee EDMO's operations and define its strategy. For instance, they adopted three important documents in order to set EDMO's vision and mission, EDMO's scientific focus, and Guiding principles for relations with donors and external funds.

The goal of Task III is supporting and facilitating the coordination of independent fact-checking activities in Europe. This is being achieved through many instruments and activities including a





mapping of fact-checking organisation in Europe and the creation of searchable directories aggregating fact-checks and media literacy material from external repositories thanks to ATC and its subcontractor Deutsche Welle (DW) as well as EUI-STG. Under the coordination of Pagella Politica, EDMO created a solid – and growing – network of fact-checking organisations in the EU and in other EEA countries. Together, EDMO’s fact-checking network developed a series of briefs and investigations which offered an innovative overview of the disinformation phenomenon in Europe. In order to be up to the most recent developments of online disinformation, the role of the network was of paramount importance in order to create a database of fact-checked content related to the war in Ukraine.

Aarhus University with its DATALAB – Center for Digital Social Research was responsible for Task IV, whose objective was supporting and facilitating the coordination of academic research activities on disinformation in Europe and creating a repository with relevant peer-reviewed scientific literature. Building on the work of the previous year, EDMO broadened the network of research institutions and substantially enlarged its repository of relevant articles, now encompassing articles in other languages than English.

Lastly, Task V – providing academic input and methodological support to public authorities in monitoring the policies put in place by online platforms to limit the spread and the impact of disinformation – was led by the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom at the European University Institute. Cooperating with other European and national authorities, EDMO kept on reporting to the European Commission about the main trends of disinformation in the single countries and, most notably, worked on a set of structural indicators to monitor the impact of the Code of Practice on Disinformation.

Overall, it is to be noted that, during its first years of activity, EDMO went well beyond what was originally included in the remit of the project. The coordination of the EDMO national and multinational Hubs as well as the establishment of the EDMO Taskforce and the work on disinformation around the Ukraine conflict exemplify that. Through similar additional efforts, the consortium has developed and consolidated EDMO’s position as a multinational and multidisciplinary platform amplifying its capacity to understand, detect and tackle disinformation at a European level.

EDMO has also become a key player in the field of access to data for research purposes. The work carried out by its Working Group on Platform-to-Researcher Data Access is indeed unprecedented. The draft Code of Conduct included in the [Report](#) of the working group is an exemplary first step to provide a framework for independent researchers’ access to platform data in a GDPR compliant manner.

