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DURING THE PRIDE MONTH, DISINFORMATION ABOUT LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES GOES VIRAL IN THE EU
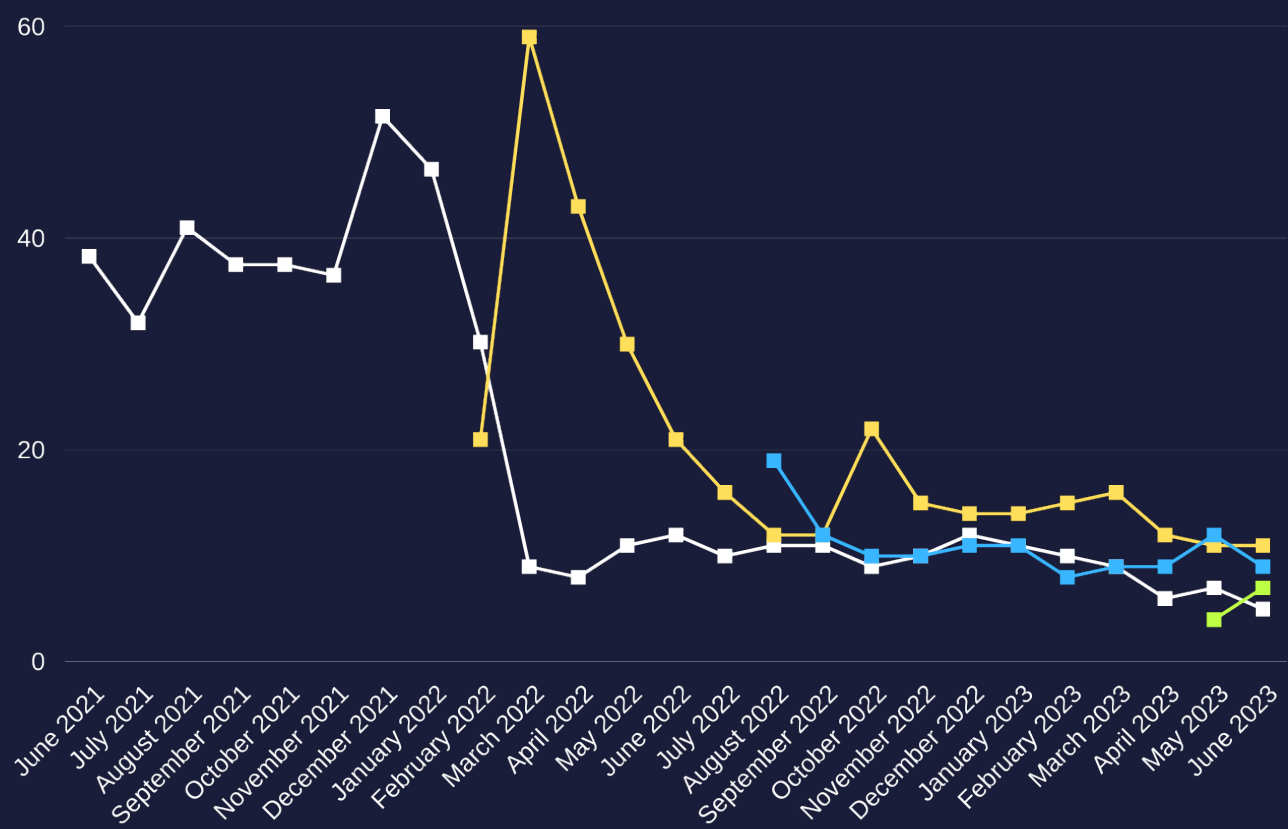
DISINFORMATION ABOUT UKRAINE AND CLIMATE CHANGE REMAINS STABLE IN JUNE, WHILE COVID-19-RELATED DISINFORMATION IS FADING AWAY AND DISINFORMATION ABOUT THE EU GROWS.

The 25 organizations* part of the EDMO fact-checking network that contributed to this brief published a total of 1.503 fact-checking articles in June 2023.

Out of these articles, 162 (11%) focused on Ukraine-related disinformation; 78 (5%) on COVID-19-related disinformation; 135 (9%) on climate change-related disinformation; and 100 (7%) on disinformation related to the EU.

While Ukraine-related disinformation remains stable, disinformation about Covid-19 touches a new low, confirming the decreasing relevance of the topic. Disinformation about climate change recedes after the surge in May connected to extreme weather events in Spain and Italy. EU-related disinformation is growing but, as for now, there is not enough data to assess if this is a trend.
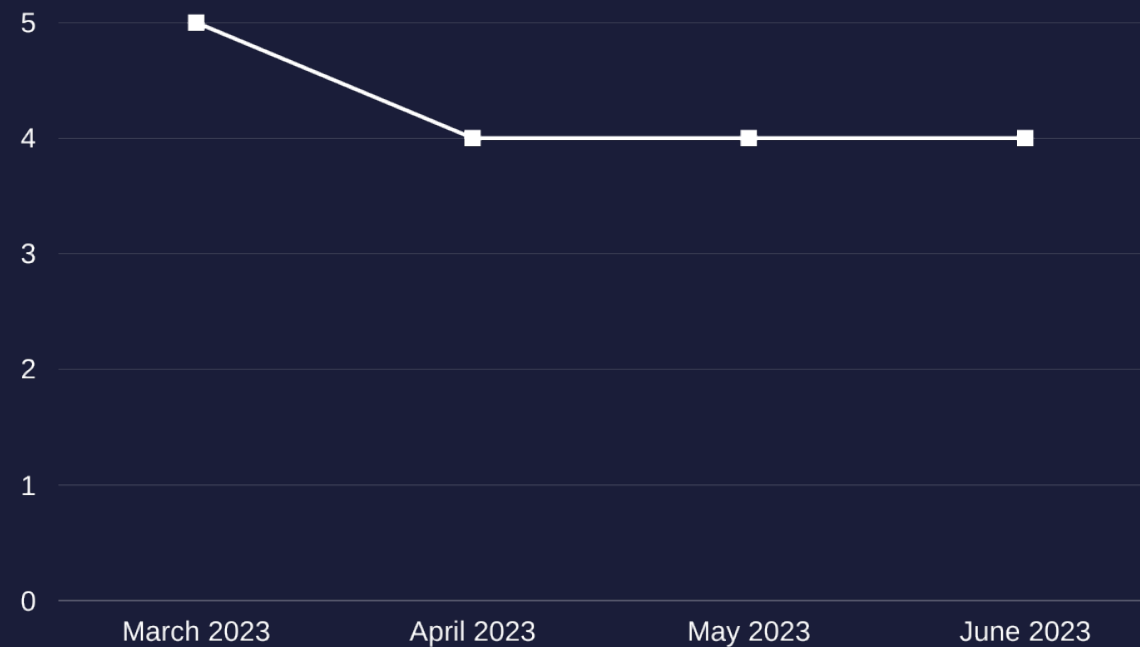

% of COVID-19-related disinformation on total detected disinformation

% of Ukraine-related disinformation on total detected disinformation

% of climate change-related disinformation on total detected disinformation

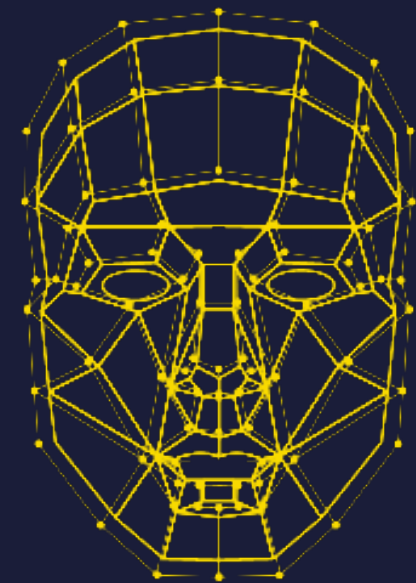% of EU-related disinformation on total detected disinformation

*Organizations that contributed to this brief: 15min, AFP, Correctiv, Delfi, Demagog.cz, Demagog (Pl), DPA, DW, EFE Verifica, Ellinika Hoaxes, Factcheck Vlaanderen, Faktisk, FranceTV, Funky, Greece Fact Checking, Lakmusz, Maldita, Newtral, PagellaPolitica/Facta, Polígrafo, Pravda, Press Hub Romania, Re:Baltica, The Journal Fact-Check, Verificat

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AI-GENERATED DISINFO REMAINS LOW AND STABLE

AI-generated disinformation accounts for 4% of all detected disinformation (58 articles out of 1.503). The value is the same as that recorded in May and April, and similar to the one recorded in March (5%), when the monitoring started.

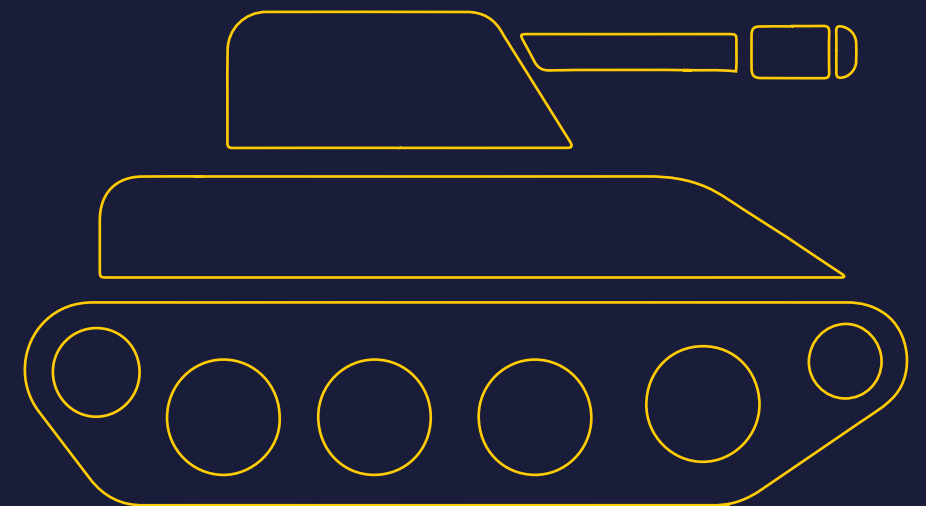| | March 2023 | April 2023 | May 2023 | June 2023 |

All the detected cases regard AI-generated images. As highlighted by EDMO in a dedicated article and in previous briefs, it is still not possible to have a clear picture of the AI-generated textual disinformation that can be eventually spread through large language models.

MAIN NARRATIVES DETECTED

In the weeks before the NATO summit in Vilnius, scheduled for July 11-12, the main disinformation narrative related to the war in Ukraine was the one about military escalation involving Eastern European countries (eg. in Latvia, Lithuania, Poland), together with conspiracy theories about Ukraine being involved in child-trafficking and in the harvesting of organs from children, and about about the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka Dam.

About the other main topics of disinformation monitored – Covid-19, climate change and the EU - the main narratives did not evolve significantly in June.

DISINFORMATION ABOUT LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES

Disinformation about LGBTQ+ was already a significant phenomenon in May and, as foreseen in the previous brief, further increased in June. This is in fact the "Pride month", when in many EU countries demonstrations took place, and many false news exploited the media coverage of the topic to spread exaggerations, false messages - like the one about a non-existing "Family Pride" organized by the italian government - and accusations, of paedophilia and gender indoctrination among others, against the LGBTQ+ communities .

The main narratives are the ones already detected in a dedicated EDMO investigation, but in June emerged in many EU countries the technique of linking this kind of disinformation to children, with the likely intent to maximize the emotional negative reaction of the readers. A similar technique was detected, as said (see slide n.4), also in the Ukraine-related disinformation.

EXAMPLES OF FALSE NEWS ABOUT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE AND CHILDREN

- In the Netherlands, Croatia and Lithuania, false news circulated about a book allegedly for children, that intends to sexualize them and promote promiscuity.

- In Bulgaria false claims circulated about the newly appointed Minister of Labour and Social Policy Ivanka Shalapatova wanting to enforce "gender neutrality" in kindergartens.

- In Italy and Spain a doctored image circulated of a participant of a Pride manifestation wearing a white T-shirt with the words "Trans kids are sexy".

- In Romania the false narrative about initiatives aiming to wrongfully take children away from their families to give them up for adoption into LGBTQ+ families keeps circulating.

- In Spain and Lithuania the claim that the German police would have taken their children from a Muslim family for saying at school that homosexuality and LGBTQ+ culture is not accepted in Islam is still circulating, echoing a similar viral disinformation phenomenon detected in the past in Scandinavia.

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Legend:
- NOT EU
- EU + Norway
- EU+ Norway- No data

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

■ The Arc de Triomphe, in Paris, has been decorated with a large rainbow installation to celebrate Pride

● The US and 12 other countries signed a deal to eliminate agriculture, in order to counter climate change

▲ The Simpsons predicted the Titan submarine crash

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT VERIFIED DISINFORMATION STORIES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL:

A foundation linked to the founder of the Wagner Group, the Russian oligarch Yevgeny Prigozhin, has published an "investigation" with false information about an alleged sex trafficking network involving Ukrainian minors living in Spain.

Hungarian government media reported that a "mandatory migrant quota" was voted in Brussels.

Polish citizens are basically not present any more in the UK and Ireland, after being the most populous minority there for years, thanks to the nationalist Polish Government doing all it can to bring them back home.

A woman claiming to be a former observer for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has revealed how Ukrainian troops harvested organs from children.

METHODOLOGY

The information contained in this brief was collected via a questionnaire sent to the fact-checking organizations that are part of the <u>EDMO</u> fact-checking network.

Reference period: 1-30 June 2023. Number of respondents: 25.
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