



European Digital Media Observatory

EDMO Taskforce on
2024 European Elections

WEEKLY INSIGHTS and EARLY WARNINGS

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DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES YOU MAY COME ACROSS

Rise in Islamophobic rhetoric

Muslim migrants are trying to impose Sharia in Europe: This disinformation campaign is spreading across Europe, particularly in light of upcoming local elections, and could circulate in different member States ahead of the EU elections as well. Fabricated stories claim, in particular, that vast numbers of Muslim migrants are poised to implement Sharia law and have already influenced election outcomes in cities across Spain and the UK.

Politicians are fostering a replacement of the European local population with migrants (The Great Replacement conspiracy theory): another common disinformation narrative linked to immigration is false news accusing politicians of being actively seeking to replace Europeans with migrants. False stories accuse politicians of fostering the massive expansion of Muslims, of promoting the alleged Islamization of EU member states (for example, demolishing churches to build mosques), and more in general of being anti-patriotic (eg. Donald Tusk insulting Polishness).

EU vs Farmers

The EU wants to destroy European agriculture: This narrative has gained traction through social media posts featuring Ursula Von der Leyen and tractors, alongside banners proclaiming catastrophic messages about EU policies. These posts misinterpret the revised Industrial Emissions Directive (IED), which extends regulations to larger farms to control pollution. Critics falsely claim that these measures equate to a complete ban on animal farming. This disinformation feeds into an ongoing broader narrative of the EU undermining national agricultural sectors and allegedly subjecting farmers to unfair competition and drastically reducing the amount of available land for commercial farming, thus fomenting distrust among European farmers and the public towards EU environmental initiatives.

DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES YOU MAY COME ACROSS

Climate Change Denial

Human CO2 emissions are insignificant: Amidst global calls for environmental action, a narrative downplaying the significance of human-generated CO2 emissions compared to natural sources is going around in many EU countries including Italy, often with the help of political entities. This narrative incorrectly asserts that because human emissions are relatively small, they do not disrupt the natural balance of the atmosphere, thus climate change actions are unwarranted. This dangerously misleading claim ignores scientific consensus about the accumulative and impactful nature of anthropogenic emissions, which are critical drivers of global climate change.



EARLY WARNINGS: WHAT TO EXPECT?

1. AstraZeneca's decision to withdraw its Covid-19 vaccine, because the abundance of new shots in the market has led to a decline in demand, is very likely to be exploited by disinformation campaigns. In particular, it appears probable that disinformation will connect this decision to another recent news, already the object of disinformation, about AstraZeneca admitting the side effects of its Covid-19 vaccine (some traditional media unfortunately made a similar incorrect connection).

2. Another topic that is expected to gain traction concerns the EU's sanctions against Russia, especially the economic sanctions targeting the LNG sector. Relevant narratives could touch upon the severity of the sanctions on Russia's economy, claiming that they are ineffective while negatively impacting EU member states. Additionally, the complex legal nuances related to the use of frozen Russian assets for aiding Ukraine might be oversimplified or misconstrued in public discourse, leading to confusion and misinterpretation of EU policies.

A related topic is the recent push by Ukraine for the EU to buy arms directly from its manufacturers, discussed at the EU-Ukraine Defence Industries Forum. This move might be misrepresented, exaggerating EU commitments or questioning the feasibility and legality of using EU funds, including frozen Russian assets. These narratives might also doubt the practicality of Ukrainian production capabilities, and claim the EU's management of these efforts is an unsustainable financial burden during economic uncertainty.



EARLY WARNINGS: WHAT TO EXPECT?

3. The recent adoption of directives to enhance the effectiveness and independence of EU equality bodies - entities established to promote equal treatment, combat discrimination and offer assistance to victims - could lead to misinformation. Some narratives might exaggerate the scope of these directives, e.g. suggesting they impose excessive EU control over national policies, while others might underplay their importance in combating discrimination. Misrepresentations may also frame these legal measures as either overly ideological or as instances of EU overreach, potentially undermining their legitimacy and the broader goals of ensuring equal rights and protections across the union.

METHODOLOGY

The information contained in this brief is based on the [EDMO EU Elections Disinfo Bulletin](#), the [EDMO monthly fact-checking briefs](#) and [investigations](#), and the EFCSN fact-checking database focused on the 2024 European Elections, [Elections24Check](#).

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Responsible EDMO organisation:
EDMO Taskforce On 2024 European Elections

Main editor of this report:
Stamos Archontis, FactReview

Contributors:
Tommaso Canetta, PagellaPolitica/Facta.news
Enzo Panizio, PagellaPolitica/Facta.news
Louise Carnapete-Rinieri, Florence School of
Transnational Governance
Shan Mao, Florence School of Transnational
Governance.

Graphic designer:
Maria Laura Minoli, Florence School of Transnational
Governance.

For further information: edmo.tfeu2024@eui.eu



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