



European Digital Media Observatory

EDMO Taskforce on
2024 European Elections

WEEKLY INSIGHTS and EARLY WARNINGS

n°7

Published on Friday, 24 May 2024

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DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES YOU MAY COME ACROSS

SLOVAK PRIME MINISTER ROBERT FICO SHOOTING

Links between the shooter and the Slovak opposition parties: one of the first viral false content to circulate was a fake image of the shooter portrayed as interacting with Martin Šimečka, journalist and father of the co-founder of Slovakia's main opposition party, Progressive Slovakia. Other similar false stories circulated in the country, and it was also claimed that the main opposition party endorsed the violent act, instead of condemning it.

Links between the shooter and Ukraine: the theory that the shooter was somehow linked to Ukraine started circulating online almost immediately after the event, and it was supported by various demonstrable false content. In particular, it was falsely claimed that the wife of the shooter was a Ukrainian refugee and activist, or that the shooter had ties with Ukrainian secret services.

Other conspiracy theories: while in reality the motivations of the shooter are not clear yet, conspiracy theories linking the attempted assassination with the WHO Pandemic treaty, the CIA or NATO, George Soros, Fico's position about migration or other polarizing issues circulated widely on social media.

DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES YOU MAY COME ACROSS

IRANIAN PRESIDENT EBRAHIM RAISI'S HELICOPTER CRASH

Conspiracy theories: Following the helicopter crash that killed Iran's president Ebrahim Raisi, various conspiracies and false stories have surfaced. Shortly after the news broke, unverified information began spreading across several European countries. Some of these false claims included images supposedly showing the helicopter Raisi was on and the accident itself or photos allegedly proving he is still alive. In Poland, one significant false claim connected the crash to alleged US actions, implying a coordinated effort to eliminate leaders opposing US hegemony, including Slovak PM Robert Fico.

Exaggerating the reactions: In addition to these conspiracy theories, in Spain, other misleading content reports alleged reactions of grief or celebration of Raisi's death from international figures.

COVID-19 VACCINE

Covid-19 vaccines are dangerous or even lethal: a new wave of false stories surged after AstraZeneca withdrew its vaccine from the market. The main reason cited for the withdrawal was competition from more effective vaccines, but false stories claim that the European Medicines Agency had actually unilaterally banned AstraZeneca's vaccine because shots were allegedly dangerous or could cause death, side effects and serious illness.

Covid-19 vaccines are means for oppression: False stories circulated in recent days suggest that the EU Parliament censors discussions about vaccination or that a vaccination certificate will be required to vote in the upcoming EU elections. This kind of content is consistent with the well-known disinformation narrative that claims Covid-19 vaccination was a means for non-democratic EU institutions to limit the freedom of citizens.



EARLY WARNINGS: WHAT TO EXPECT?

1. European countries recognizing Palestinian State: in coordinated announcements, Spain, Norway and Ireland unveiled plans to recognize a Palestinian state on 28 May. Considering the extreme polarization that surrounds the topic, this development will likely prompt a new wave of disinformation about the situation in the Middle East, potentially targeting all the actors involved: the States that will recognize Palestine as a State, Israel and Palestinians.

2. ICC requesting the arrest of Netanyahu and Hamas leaders: the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor's request for arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, and Hamas leaders, over alleged war crimes is expected to spark significant disinformation. False news claiming that the ICC already issued these arrest warrants has already been detected and debunked, but more disinformation targeting, again, all the actors involved (the ICC, Israel, Hamas and so on) is to be expected.

3. Zelensky urging US and Europe to do more: Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky urged the Allies to do more to defend his nation, dismissing fears of nuclear escalation and proposing that NATO planes shoot down Russian missiles in Ukrainian airspace. His statements are likely to spark the dissemination of disinformation content, in particular about the escalation of the war and the direct involvement of European countries in the conflict, one of the main narratives that affected the European infosphere in April.

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](#).

Reference period: May 2024

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EDMO has received funding
from the European Union
under Contract number: "LC-01935415 "