European Digital Media Observatory

2024 EDMO Annual Conference Report

Bringing together the community that tackles disinformation

About the 2024 EDMO Annual Conference

The 2024 EDMO Annual Conference, the fourth delivered by EDMO, was a two-day event that took place on 13 and 14 May in Brussels, at the NHow Brussels Bloom. Registrations to attend the 2024 EDMO Annual Conference opened in March 2024. Over 200 participants attended the event over the two days. The event was open to in-person participation only and convened media and policy practitioners, policymakers, academics, regulators, diplomats, journalists and members of civil society.

You can watch the **conference video here ›** as well as an **interview** with the conference keynote speaker, Vice-President Věra Jourová, **here ›** on the EDMO website.

Panels 1 and 2: Artificial Intelligence and Disinformation

Setting the scene

- Speaker: **Professor Claes de Vreese**

In his opening speech, **Professor de Vreese**, a member of the EDMO Executive Board and professor at the University of Amsterdam, discussed the impact of AI on elections and disinformation. While democracies haven't collapsed due to AI-driven disinformation, incidents in countries like Indonesia and India show its potential. He cautioned against sensationalising AI's ability to overturn election results, emphasising more subtle influences like tailored disinformation targeting vulnerable groups. The evolving political landscape sees AI enhancing data-driven messaging, posing challenges for traditional media and citizens' ability to detect AI-generated content. Regulatory efforts like the Digital Services Act are underway, setting the stage for the panel discussion on AI's role in disinformation.

From the left: T. Stroband, I. Orssich, M. Faddoul, J. Bryson, D. Mekkaoui and T. Abrhámová during Panel 1 on AI as a contributor to disinformation.

Panel 1: AI as a Contributor to Disinformation

- Chair: **Professor Claes de Vreese**
- Speakers: **Táňa Abrhámová (CEDMO), Irina Orssich (European Commission), Tjade Stroband (Microsoft), Joanna Bryson (Hertie School), Marc Faddoul (AI forensic), David Mekkaoui (Europe MédiaLab)**

AI and, in particular, generative AI have been quite the buzzwords for the last few months. The release of updated generative AI products has opened questions on their role in the production and dissemination of disinformation. This panel aimed to discuss how generative AI contributes to disinformation and assess real risks.

Opening the panel, Táňa Abrhámová, representing CEDMO, highlighted the surge in media and public interest in the issue of disinformationduring the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war, which peaked in 2023 but continued into 2024, particularly in Czech media. Despite huge media attention to the topic of AI following the introduction of ChatGPT, a survey of CEDMO revealed limited public engagement with AI tools and deepfake awareness among Czechs and Slovaks, signaling the need for educational efforts and effective fact-checking.

Irina Orssich from the European Commission outlined the EU's comprehensive framework to combat disinformation, including data protection rules, the Code of Practice on Disinformation, the Digital Services Act, and upcoming regulations on transparency in political advertising and the Artificial Intelligence Act. Orssich emphasised the AI At's role in categorising AI systems into risk levels, particularly high-risk systems influencing elections, which must meet strict requirements to prevent bias and discrimination.

Tjade Stroband from Microsoft discussed the company's approach to responsible AI development, focusing on generative AI. They prioritise building AI systems with guardrails to ensure outputs align with intended purposes and highlighted initiatives like content integrity tools that they make available to mark content as official during elections.

Next, Joanna Bryson from the Hertie School expressed concerns about "surveillance democracy" and market concentration, cautioning against the myopic focus on fake news and advocating for robust policy developments prioritising the Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act.

Marc Faddoul, Director of AI Forensics, highlighted concerns about generative AI's dissemination of false information and the impact of micro-targeting in elections. He emphasised the need to prioritise the regulation of social media platforms and their recommender systems.

Finally, David Mekkaoui of Europe MédiaLab presented initiatives to aid media in adopting AI technologies, emphasising collaboration and proactive regulation, particularly concerning high-risk AI applications. Mekkaoui stressed the importance of trust indicators in enhancing media credibility and quality content production. A vibrant Q&A followed, where the role of AI literacy and the *human* factor was emphasised.

Panel 2: AI as Part of the Solution to Disinformation

- Chair: **Professor Kalina Bontcheva**
- Speakers: **Carlos Hernández-Echevarría (IBERIFIER, Maldita) Andrew Dudfield (FullFact), Antonis Ramfos (ATC, EDMO, TITAN), Remo Sasso (xDNA & Aletheia), Gijs van Beek (BENEDMO, Textgain)**

After having discussed the role of AI (in particular generative) in creating and disseminating disinformation, the focus moved to how AI can also be used as a tool that contributes to tackling disinformation.

Carlos Hernández-Echevarría from IBERIFIER, Maldita, discussed the positive impact of AI, particularly generative AI, in combating disinformation. He emphasised how AI has enhanced fact-checking capabilities, including improved detection, investigation, and dissemination of debunked content. By automating certain tasks, AI allows fact-checkers to focus on more critical issues. Maldita's use of generative AI to connect and analyse

data was also emphasised, identifying recurring narratives and improving overall efficiency. However, he stressed the need for human supervision and discussed concerns about the quality of information AI systems learn from, advocating for collaboration among fact-checkers to ensure AI produces more factual responses.

The next panellist, **Andrew Dudfield** from FullFact, discussed the role of technology, particularly AI, in enhancing fact-checking efforts. While acknowledging AI's limitations in directly fact-checking due to the complexity of verifying new information, he emphasised its utility in streamlining processes, such as data monitoring and identifying potential claims for fact-checking. Dudfield highlighted how FullFact utilises AI to support fact-checkers globally, sharing technology and collaborating with organisations in various countries and languages. He stressed the importance of investing in technology for fact-checkers and called for collective action with platforms to ensure the dissemination of accurate information, especially with upcoming elections.

Antonis Ramfos from ATC and TITAN introduced an AI coaching approach to empower citizens against disinformation. Using the Socratic Inquiry Method, their AI generates dialogues guiding users to critically assess information. The structured process includes clarification, challenging assumptions, evaluating evidence, and considering implications. Disinformation theory informs the dialogue, adapting to user critical thinking levels and enhancing analytical skills. They reversed typical large language model use, employing a controller to maintain structure and prevent misinformation. This multidisciplinary effort involves psychologists and philosophers, aiming to equip citizens with the tools to combat misinformation effectively.

From the left: K. Bontcheva, C. Hernández-Echevarría, A. Dudfield, A. Ramfos, R. Sasso, and G. van Beek during Panel 2 on AI as Part of the Solution to Disinformation.

Next, **Remo Sasso** presented Project Aletheia, aimed at improving fact-checking efficiency using AI. Partnering with organisations like Reuters and TILT, the project extracts and cross-references statements from content, streamlining the fact-checking process. They're developing tools to identify related content and plan to integrate social media data for additional context. Future plans include creating a dashboard accessible to fact-checkers worldwide, fostering collaboration with global fact-checking organisations to refine and optimise the system further.

Finally, **Gijs van Beek** from Textgain focused on AI for good, detecting hate speech and disinformation. Their projects include BENEDMO fact-check finder plugin and a database of fact checks. They run the European Observatory of Online Hate, monitoring social media and developing AI to categorise hate speech. They create tools like "Eersthe Hul bij Twijfel" to aid journalists and use generative AI to summarise trends and detect stances in discussions.

As summarised by **Professor Bontcheva** at the end of the panel, the main takeaway from the discussion was the importance of collaboration and cooperation in the fight against disinformation. There's a call for researchers and AI developers to work closely with fact-checkers to address their needs and challenges. Multilingualism is highlighted as a significant challenge, emphasising the need for a strategic approach to handle diverse languages.

Panel 3: Disinformation and Media and Information Literacy – Standards and Best Practices

- Chair: **Stephanie Comey (Coimisiún na Meán)**
- Speakers: **Jacob Lolck (European Parliament), Juliane von Reppert-Bismarck (Lie Detectors), Flavia Colonnese (Ecorys), Sally Reynolds (Media & Learning Association)**

It is often said that media and information literacy activities strongly contribute to building societal resilience. However, it is important that these activities follow the lifelong learning approach, that they comply with quality standards, and that their impact can be assessed. This panel, chaired by **Stephanie Comey**, Director of Media Literacy and User Education at Irish media authority Coimisiún na Meán, was the occasion to discuss the cycle and impact of media and information literacy initiatives.

Jacob Lolck, Press Officer in the *European* Parliament's Spokesperson's Unit, presented the resilience-building media literacy resources developed by the EP to tackle disinformation in advance of the EU elections. These included educational toolkits, training for teachers and students, a series of prebunking videos, and the information provided on the webpage https://elections.europa.eu/.

Juliane von Reppert-Bismarck, Executive Director and Founder of Lie Detectors, described her organisation's approach to improving media literacy. Lie Detectors brings journalists into schools to participate in bringing news literacy to students and their teachers. Lie Detectors has worked with 547 journalists to provide workshops and training to 100,000 children and 2000 teachers.

Flavia Colonnese, Senior Research Manager at Ecorys, presented the research study she is leading on media literacy evaluation, commissioned by the European Commission. She stressed that evaluation is different from quality assurance but highly complementary. She described media literacy as an essential tool in countering disinformation, but the lack of agreement on how to carry it out and even on how to define it contributes to the lack of rigorous evaluation and reliance on self-assessment. The study aims to address this by building an evaluation toolkit.

Live illustration by Zsofi Lang on Panel 3 on Disinformation and Media and Information Literacy – Standards and Best Practices.

Sally Reynolds, COO of the Media and Learning Association (the leading media literacy partner in the EDMOeu consortium), presented the work of EDMO Working Group on Standards and Best Practices, which has identified 12 guiding principles/standards for effective media literacy initiatives. She explained the goal of the standards - to raise the quality of media literacy initiatives, the process of putting them together via gathering consultative feedback, and how the published standards will be structured, with explanations of why they matter and best practice examples for each.

The panel then discussed the challenges of evaluation, noting how hard an improvement in media literacy competencies is to measure and the need for more scientific studies to be carried out that use control groups. Chair **Stephanie Comey** noted that media literacy is different to other types of literacy as it is made up of multiple different competencies, and requirements change as the media environment changes, meaning that an evaluation framework would similarly have to evolve over time.

Keynote speech: Věra Jourová – Vice-President for Values and Transparency, European Commission

Vice-President **Věra Jourová** thanked the audience and expressed her happiness at celebrating the anniversary of EDMO. She highlighted the critical role EDMO plays, especially before elections, in addressing disinformation, and welcomed the expansion of EDMO's activities. She stressed that this was even more important in the context of new challenges: intensified disinformation campaigns linked to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and to the tensions in the Middle East and AI-fueled amplification of disinformation.

She pointed out that EDMO's actions were an important part of the broader strategy to combat disinformation, and highlighted measures under the enforcement of the Digital Services Act and the Code of Practice against disinformation. She welcomed in particular the reliable data and structural indicators provided by EDMO, as essential for preparing reports and informing EU strategies, and EDMO's efforts in developing a safe framework for data access for researchers.

She stressed the importance of other factors for a holistic approach, not least cybersecurity, combating espionage and corruption, and addressing disinformation amplified by AI. She discussed the threats to democracy and the need for effective enforcement of legislation at the Member State level.

In her keynote speech, Věra Jourová underscored the need for protecting media freedom, for robust fact-checking, and for citizen education and media literacy, to

enhance resilience against disinformation and limit vulnerabilities that malicious actors aim at exploiting. She called for improved coordination among national authorities and highlighted the pivotal role of EDMO and of the Digital Services Act and the Code of Practice against disinformation in safeguarding fair elections and democratic integrity.

Věra Jourová noted that fact-checking campaigns in some Member States have successfully reduced the spread of false information, demonstrating the positive impact of such efforts. Rather than focusing solely on regulating platforms, she believes it is crucial to educate people to navigate media responsibly and promote media freedom, but also to inform them appropriately, not least when it comes to AI-generated content they are exposed to. She emphasised the need to restore respect for evidence-based truth, counter past nihilism and relativism, and ensure journalists are well-compensated and safe.

Live illustration by Zsofi Lang on the keynote speech delivered by Vice-President Věra Jourová.

The Vice-President also discussed efforts to improve journalists' working conditions through regulation and funding. She stressed the importance of both citizens and media in fighting disinformation, suggesting that politicians caught lying should be called out on their lies. Finally, she reflected on the challenges of conducting thorough interviews with politicians, highlighting the need for journalists to be well-prepared to hold public figures accountable, especially before elections.

In conclusion, the Vice-President reiterated her ongoing support for EDMO initiatives. She expressed confidence in the positive outcomes of these efforts and extended her gratitude to EDMO and its hubs for their crucial contributions.

From the left: D. Braun, D. Colard, M. de Cock Buning, A. Zizola, E. Goodman, G. Zagni.

Panel 4: Disinformation and the 2024 European Parliament Elections

- Chair: **Madeleine de Cock Buning (EDMO, Florence School of Transnational Governance, EUI)**
- Speakers: **Giovanni Zagni (EDMO, Pagella Politica / Facta.news), Emma Goodman (EDMO, European University Institute and London School of Economics), Delphine Colard (European Parliament), Anna Zizola (X), Daniel Braun (European Commission)**

Ahead of the 2024 European Parliament elections, it is key to discuss which disinformation narratives can impact the rights of the citizens to make informed decisions and which measures are implemented to guarantee those rights and create societal resilience. This panel started with a presentation of the work of the EDMO Task Force on elections and was the opportunity to get direct knowledge on what is implemented by relevant actors in order to guarantee the rights of citizens. Guided by the questions of **Madeleine de Cock Buning**, chair of the panel, the speakers took the floor one by one.

Giovanni Zagni detailed the EDMO Task Force On 2024 European Elections' comprehensive and collaborative efforts over the past year, showcasing its role in uniting various stakeholders such as national and regional hubs, fact-checkers, media literacy experts, and technology professionals ahead of the European elections. The task force has significantly advanced its work by building on previous EDMO initiatives and contributed to detailed monthly fact-checking briefs, which are increasingly refined to capture the scope and focus of disinformation in Europe.

EDMO has also conducted targeted research into emerging threats like AI-generated disinformation and analysed the impact of such narratives on recent national elections. Noteworthy achievements include the creation of original reports on disinformation trends

and the launch of a daily newsletter for rapid updates on critical developments linked to the elections, as well as weekly publications of disinformation narratives and early warnings. The task force's efforts have gained international recognition and facilitated dialogue with global stakeholders, underscoring the effectiveness of EDMO collaborative model. Finally, Giovanni Zagni expressed strong belief in the task force's ongoing contributions and the potential of continued support to enhance the fight against disinformation.

Emma Goodman reported that from April 29 to June 3, EDMOeu and its Hubs launched the "#BeElectionSmart" online campaign to help citizens find accurate election information. An editorial committee created the campaign messages, and a guide with editable templates was provided to facilitate participation across the network. Each week, new messages and practical tips were shared to aid in discerning reliable information, with translations into various EU languages for local relevance. Major platforms, including Google, Microsoft, and Meta, supported the campaign by featuring it on their sites and providing promotional resources. The effectiveness of the campaign will be evaluated to inform future initiatives.

Delphine Colard emphasised the critical importance of combating disinformation and information manipulation to ensure that citizens can make informed democratic choices without interference. The European Commission and Parliament are actively engaged in pre-election information campaigns to highlight the significance of voting and counter disinformation. They are using various strategies, including proactive communication, awareness campaigns, and collaboration with fact-checking organisations and content creators, to reach diverse audiences. She noted that while legislation and institutional efforts have improved since 2019, challenges persist, as evidenced by the presence of misleading narratives and disinformation tactics in recent national elections. The goal is to enhance public understanding and participation in democracy by leveraging multiple channels and formats to address disinformation effectively.
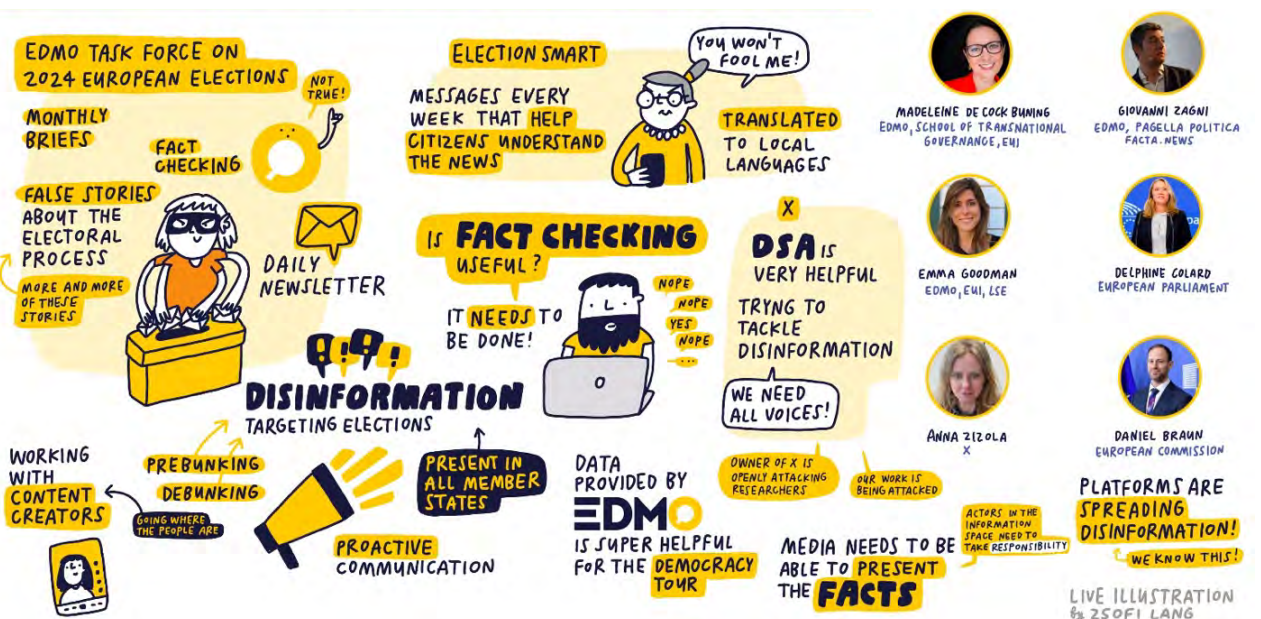
Live illustration by Zsofi Lang on Panel 4 on Disinformation and the 2024 European Parliament elections.

Anna Zizola, who transitioned from her role as a policy officer at the European Commission to work at X, shared her positive experiences and insights from her new position. At X, she leverages her extensive knowledge of EU institutions and processes gained from her previous work, which is proving valuable in shaping platform policies. Despite facing criticism, particularly regarding disinformation and departures from the Code of Practice, she mentioned that X is actively addressing these issues and is in dialogue with EDMO, sponsoring its media literacy campaign, and enhancing efforts in proactive content monitoring. Anna Zizola highlighted the significant role of EDMO daily reports in identifying and addressing disinformation circulating on the platform.

Daniel Braun noted that EDMO has proven to be crucial, significantly aiding efforts such as the Democracy Tour of the European Commission by providing essential data and insights. He identified the consolidation of data and resources as a key task, particularly with the support of regional hubs, which offer localised information and highlight recurring narratives, such as those from Russia. Daniel Braun underlined that EDMO plays a vital role in understanding and addressing the timing and impact of disinformation, especially as election dates approach. EDMO work also extends to increasing public awareness and media literacy, helping citizens navigate the growing volume of misinformation. While he acknowledged the role and impact of online platforms, he emphasised the need for community-driven efforts and robust risk assessments. Moving forward, Daniel Braun recommended that EDMO focuses on strengthening support for civil society and independent media, advancing tools for impact assessment, and improving the ability to demonstrate the effects of disinformation on society and democracy. This would enhance efforts to protect democratic processes and empower citizens to make informed decisions free from manipulation.

During the Q&A, the platform representative faced criticism for reducing its moderation team and eliminating four EU languages from its scope before the elections. It was justified as a strategic shift to automation for increased efficiency, on the basis of an internal risk assessment. Concerns were raised about attacks on researchers. The need for better communication and empowerment of civil society was also stressed. Finally, the ongoing investigations of the European Commission against two VLOPs were mentioned, raising election protection concerns as conclusions are unlikely to be delivered before the elections.

Panel 5: Online Platforms' Data Access for Research Purposes

- Chair: **Lisa Ginsborg (EDMO, Florence School of Transnational Governance, EUI)**
- Speakers: **Rebekah Tromble (George Washington University, EDMO), Alberto Rabbachin (European Commission), John Evans (Coimisiún na Meán), Simone Gobello (META), Bastien Carniel (Science Feedback), Iva Nenadic (EDMO, Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, EUI).**

Access to data remains one of the main priorities for the community, and data access features prominently in the CoP and the Digital Services Act. In addition to academic researchers, fact-checkers and civil society need to be involved in this debate. The session started with the recent developments in the work EDMO is leading in this regard to gather feedback from the community and then elaborate on solutions.
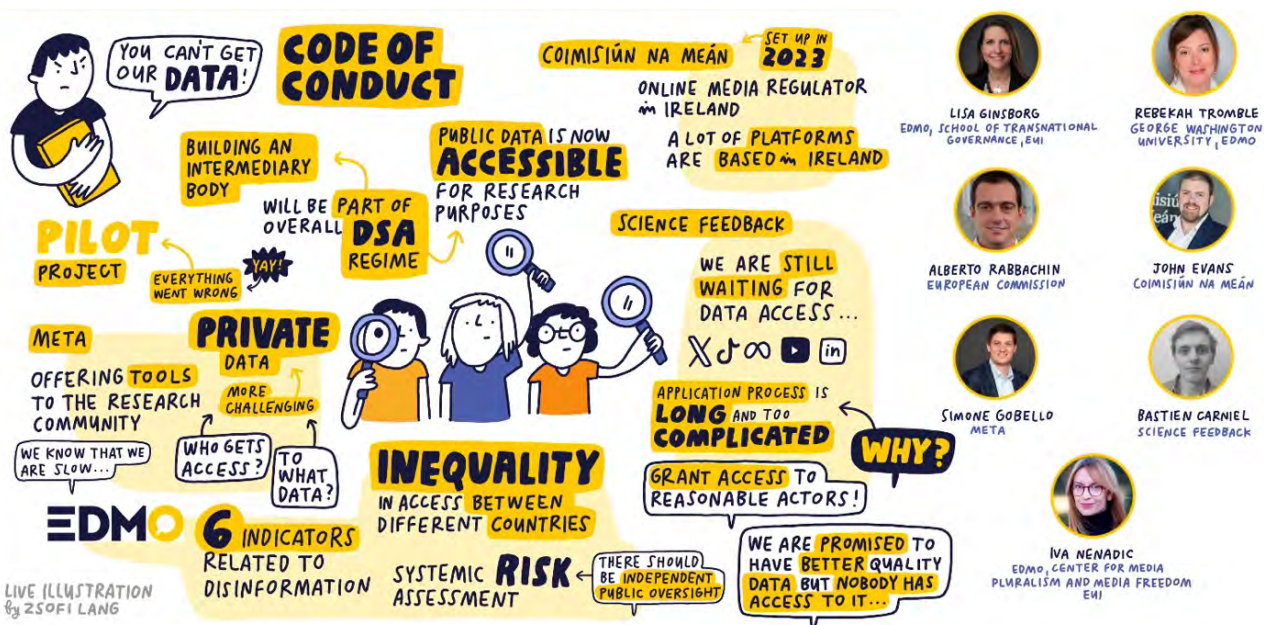
Live illustration by Zsofi Lang on Panel 5 on Online platforms' data access for research purposes.

Rebekah Tromble recounted six years of efforts to improve data access for independent researchers who seek to examine the impacts of digital platforms on society. These efforts began with an EDMO-led, multi-stakeholder working group that drafted a GDPR Code of Conduct on Platform-to-Researcher Data Access. The Code seeks to provide greater clarity for both researchers and platforms regarding appropriate data protection approaches, processes, and standards for researcher data access. One of the clear points of consensus within this working group was the need for an independent intermediary body that could help facilitate data access by, for instance, conducting expert reviews of research proposals and assessing both the platforms' and researchers' adherence to the standards laid out in the draft Code of Conduct. Thus, in 2023, EDMO launched a second multi-stakeholder working group that has been laying out the values and principles, core tasks, and governance

structures of a new independent intermediary, with a particularly focus on how it might assist and advise regulators as part of the Digital Services Act framework. The intermediary body is expected to launch in the fall of 2024. The speaker stressed the need for patience and collaboration among all stakeholders, as the system for data access will be complex and evolving over time.

Alberto Rabbachin emphasised the critical role of data access in maintaining digital information integrity. The speaker highlighted successful research examples enabled by data access, such as studies on structural indicators and political ads, made possible by the Digital Services Act. Despite progress, challenges remain, including difficulties in obtaining detailed data and assessing the effectiveness of data access. Since August 2023, Article 40 of the Digital Services Act mandates that Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) provide public data for research without undue delay. The Commission is actively investigating compliance and is working on a delegated act to refine rules for accessing non-public data. Alberto Rabbachin finally expressed optimism for improved data access and further valuable research as the DSA's implementation continues.

From the left: B. Carniel, J. Evans, S. Gobello, L. Ginsborg, R. Tromble, A. Rabbachin, and I. Nenadic.

John Evans presented the Coimisiún na Meán, which evolved from Ireland's Broadcasting Authority and became a Digital Services Coordinator (DSC) under the DSA on February 17. They have set up processes for handling trusted flaggers, online dispute resolutions, and public inquiries. They are developing a risk-based compliance framework for supervising large online platforms and are focusing on building the capacity to manage vetted researchers effectively. The organisation anticipates high demand due to the presence of major social media platforms in Ireland. They are currently reviewing the European Commission's delegated act for further guidance and have been involved in early discussions and pilots related to research data access. They expect challenges with data requests and pushback from platforms but are preparing to address these issues. Coimisiún na Meán is working to enhance its research team and address data protection concerns. They aim to improve their efficiency and capacity over time, with a focus on managing research requests and ensuring compliance with the DSA.

Simone Gobello, from Meta, underlined the importance of research for oversight and understanding the societal impact of platforms. Meta made strides in transparency with new tools under the DSA, including a comprehensive ad library and an API for public interest data. Meta recognises the need for continued evolution and feedback from the research community and regulators. For non-public data, challenges include determining access criteria, data availability, and safeguarding proprietary information. Meta welcomes a third-party intermediary to facilitate data access and ensure trust, while acknowledging potential misuse. They are committed to improving data access but stress the need for collaborative efforts and ongoing dialogue to refine the process.

Bastien Carniel criticised the difficulties encountered in accessing publicly available data under the DSA's Article 40.12. Despite the established reputation of Science Feedback and its relationships with platforms, it faces substantial delays and excessive barriers due to stringent data security requirements, questions about funding sources, and narrow definitions of systemic risk. They argue that these obstacles, including lengthy application processes and high scrutiny levels, hinder timely research. The speaker advocates for a more efficient access process, proposing that reputable organisations should receive direct data access, similar to the earlier, more open systems, to better support urgent research needs.

Iva Nenadic emphasised the importance of access to platform data for analysing structural indicators of disinformation, highlighting significant inequalities among EU researchers in accessing and utilising this data. She also described the structural indicators developed by EDMO to measure disinformation's prevalence, sources, audience characteristics, fact-checking effectiveness, and cross-platform dynamics. However, progress is hindered by platforms' reluctance to provide necessary data. The speaker stresses that broader data access beyond systemic risks defined by platforms is crucial for independent public oversight and effective disinformation research, given the EU's legal and political diversity.

The Q&A session highlighted the changing landscape of data access, noting disappointments with platforms that have restricted data access and impacted researchers' work. It also emphasised the need for the research community to provide feedback to the European Commission and stressed the importance of accessibility improvements. Platform representatives acknowledged the criticism and discussed ongoing efforts to enhance data accessibility while addressing challenges related to regulatory compliance and data security. The discussion also covered the potential benefits and limitations of new data tools, the need for standardised access, and the support required for researchers across Europe to fully utilise available data.

Panel 6: The EU Policy to Tackle Disinformation – The Code of Practice, the Digital Services Act and the Guidelines on Elections Integrity

- Chair: **Paula Gori (EDMO, Florence School of Transnatl. Governance, EUI)**
- Speakers: **Krisztina Stump (European Commission), Tommaso Canetta (EDMO, Pagella Politica / Facta.news), Milan Zubíček (Google), Marie Bohner (Agence France-Presse, EFCSN), Katarína Klingová (GLOBSEC), Niklas Eder (Oversight Board)**

This final session focused on the regulatory solutions in the EU. In particular, it started highlighting how EDMO contributes and can contribute to the EU policy in place and gathered feedback on the current implementation and future steps of the policy.

Krisztina Stump presented a summary of the European Commission's regulatory framework over the past five years, focussing in particular on the initiatives fighting disinformation. The European Commission's efforts include the Digital Services Act, the Code of Practice on Disinformation, and more recently, to prepare for the EP elections, the DSA election guidelines. The measures of the election guidelines draw extensively from the Code of Practice with measures such as fighting manipulative behaviour, reducing financial incentives for spreading disinformation, enhancing the transparency of political advertising, strengthening fact-checking and media literacy. EDMO also makes an important contribution to these efforts.

Tommaso Canetta then explained EDMO role in the Code of Practice on Disinformation: it contributes to the task force's subgroup on crises and elections, evaluates reports from major platforms and collaborates with the EFCSN. Notably, EDMO has contributed establishing a rapid response system to alert platforms about harmful election-related disinformation, and as the only non-signatory authorised for this under the Digital Services Act, it plays a key role in addressing disinformation threats effectively. A

significant contribution is the establishment of a rapid response system to notify platforms of harmful election-related disinformation. EDMO is uniquely positioned as the only non-signatory of the Code of Practice authorised to use this system, supported by the DSA guidelines.

Milan Zubíček introduced how Google's election preparations follow the Digital Services Act, the Code of Practice on Disinformation, and election guidelines. The company focuses on surfacing high-quality information to voters, safeguarding our platforms from abuse and equipping campaigns with the best-in-class security tools and training. Google enforces strict platform policies, uses AI and human moderation, and collaborates with the wider ecosystem, including the European Fact-Checking Standards Network. Policies related to generative AI include labeling AI-generated content and using watermarking tools, such as SynthID. Google's involvement in the Code of Practice's working groups and the Tech Accord underscores the company's commitment to election integrity.
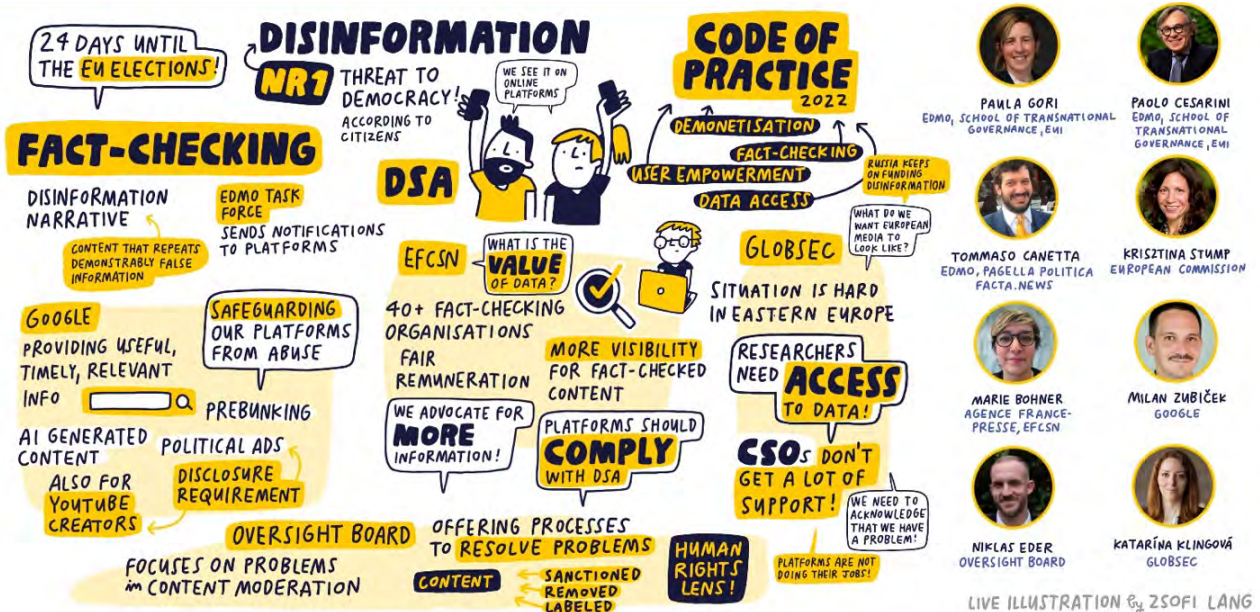
Live illustration by Zsofi Lang on Panel 6 on The EU policy to tackle disinformation – The Code of Practice, the Digital Services Act and the guidelines on elections integrity.

Marie Bohner highlighted EFCSN's role in supporting the Code of Practice on Disinformation and aligning with the Digital Services Act. With over 40 fact-checking organisations across 27 countries, EFCSN advocates for fair recognition of fact-checkers and participates in subgroups on fact-checking, crises, elections, and AI. They provide biannual transparency reports and support the creation of a European elections fact-check repository. The DSA guidelines focus on mitigating disinformation, especially during elections, and while generative AI poses challenges, its impact has been minimal. EFCSN views the frameworks as promising for global fact-checkers.

Katarína Klingová insisted on the vital role of civil society in regulating social media, particularly in smaller countries like Slovakia. With 3.5 million Facebook users, Slovakia's challenges call for a broader European perspective. Civil society groups help analyse data, ensure transparency, and work with the EU and platforms on media literacy. Despite

progress with the Code of Practice and Digital Services Act, enforcement and implementation are challenging. Civil society faces data access issues, funding shortages, and scepticism towards platform transparency reports, impacting their effectiveness and raising concerns about their ability to meet high expectations amid financial constraints and harassment of practitioners.

Niklas Eder indicated that the Oversight Board plays a crucial role in managing YouTube misinformation by addressing concrete problems in content moderation and risk assessments. Its strengths lie in its practical approach to applying codes of practice and rules, such as the Digital Services Act, particularly when dealing with complex issues like the Israel-Gasa conflict or COVID-19 misinformation. By focusing closely on real-world cases, the Board better understands the complexities of content moderation and the challenges of implementing guidelines in a way that respects fundamental rights.

The Q&A session discussed the complexity and sustainability of regulatory frameworks for countering disinformation, emphasising the need for adequate funding and resources. It highlighted the importance of ensuring local expertise and equitable implementation across all EU member states, especially in vulnerable regions. The conversation also touched on the challenges of content moderation, the role of AI, and the necessity for platforms to enforce their policies effectively. Additionally, the session addressed the need for strategic international cooperation and the global impact of regulatory practices.

Closing Remarks

In his closing remarks, **Paolo Cesarini** acknowledged the fruitful discussions and the inspirational information gathered, emphasizing that EDMO has much to digest and consider for future projects. Paolo Cesarini reflected on the richness of the program over the past two days, covering themes like AI's role in disinformation, media literacy, and election preparedness, highlighting their relevance to current debates.

Paolo Cesarini pointed out the importance of EDMO contribution to creating infrastructure for secure data access under Article 40 of the DSA. He acknowledged the progress made in AI tools assisting fact-checkers and emphasized the need for transparency and freedom of expression rather than a militarized approach to combating disinformation. He praised the cohesive and active scientific community connected within the EDMO network, noting significant advancements in media literacy and the work of fact-checkers, especially in the context of upcoming elections. Paolo Cesarini also emphasized the importance of setting standards for media literacy and better cooperation between platforms and media literacy experts.

In terms of future steps, Paolo Cesarini suggested a post-election assessment to evaluate the work done by EDMO Election Task Force, harnessing EDMO capacity to act as a network for certain policy issues, and improving coordination and joint efforts with the hubs. He emphasized the need for better analytical capabilities, moving from narrative analysis to network analysis and behavioral investigations.

Paolo Cesarini also highlighted the importance of supporting policymaking through independent oversight and structured impact assessments. He stressed the need for sustainable and diversified funding for EDMO future activities, exploring opportunities for monetization and commercialization of developed tools.

In conclusion, Paolo Cesarini acknowledged the challenges and risks faced by those working in disinformation, expressing that having many adversaries is a sign of being on the right track. He encouraged the audience to remain vigilant and committed to the mission of EDMO.

Watch the conference video ›

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