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AI-GENERATED DISINFORMATION IS ON THE RISE, CREATING PARALLEL REALITIES WHERE THE EU IS DEPICTED AS A COLLAPSING AUTOCRACY

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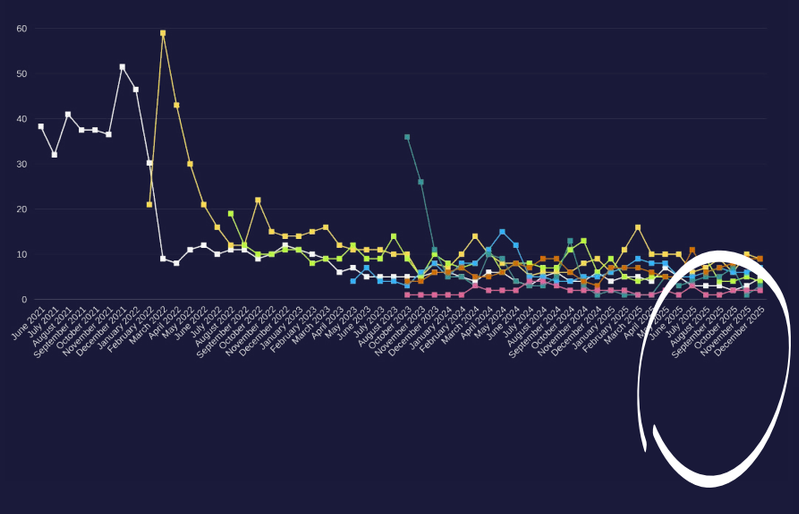
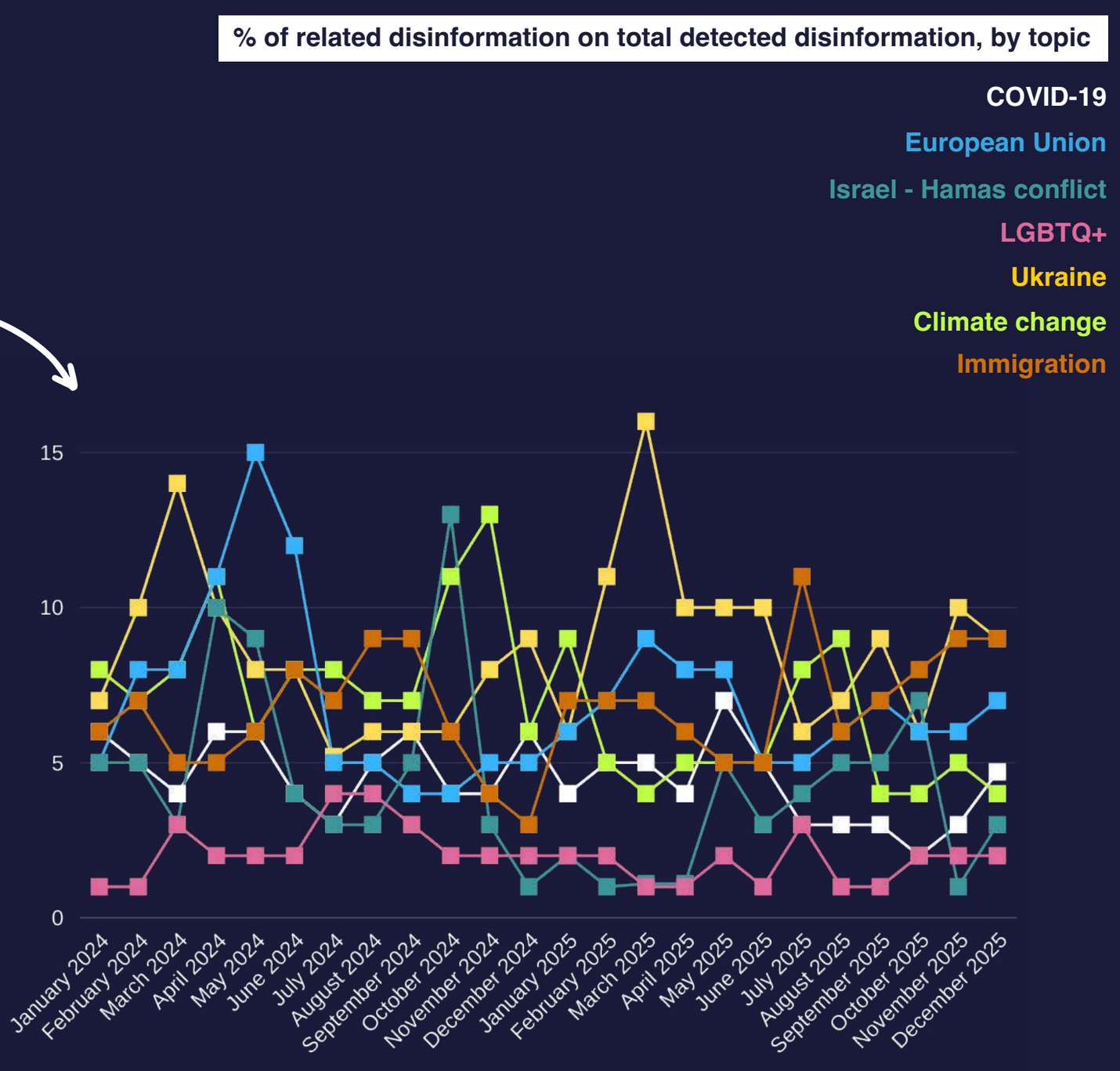
THE WAR IN UKRAINE, IMMIGRATION AND THE EU ARE THE MOST TARGETED TOPICS IN DECEMBER

The 38 organizations* part of the EDMO fact-checking network that contributed to this brief published a total of 1.605 fact-checking articles in December 2025. Out of these articles, 150 (9%) focused on disinformation related to immigration; 146 (9%) on Ukraine-related disinformation; 107 (7%) on disinformation related to the EU; 60 (4%) on climate change-related disinformation; 50 (3%) on the crisis in Gaza; 31 (2%) on COVID-19-related disinformation; and 25 (2%) on disinformation about LGBTQ+ and gender issues.

Following the trend registered in November 2025, the most targeted topics by disinformation are immigration, the war in Ukraine and the European Union. The share of disinformation on the other topics monitored by these briefs remained stable, with only minor fluctuations.





** Organizations that contributed to this brief: APA, AFP, CORRECTIV, Delfi Lithuania, Delfi Estonia, Demagog.cz, Demagog.org.pl, Demagog.sk, Deutsche Welle, dpa, EFE Verifica, Ellinika Hoaxes, Fact Check Cyprus, FactReview, Factcheck Vlaanderen, Faktabaari, Faktisk, Funky Citizens, Greece Fact Check, INFOVERITAS, Källkritikbyrån, Knack, Lakmusz, Maldita.es, Newtral, Nieuwscheckers, Oštro, Pagella Politica/Facta, Polígrafo, Pravda Association, Media Provereno, Re:Baltica, MEFOS, The Journal Ireland, TjekDet, VerificaRTVE, VRT NWS, 15min.*

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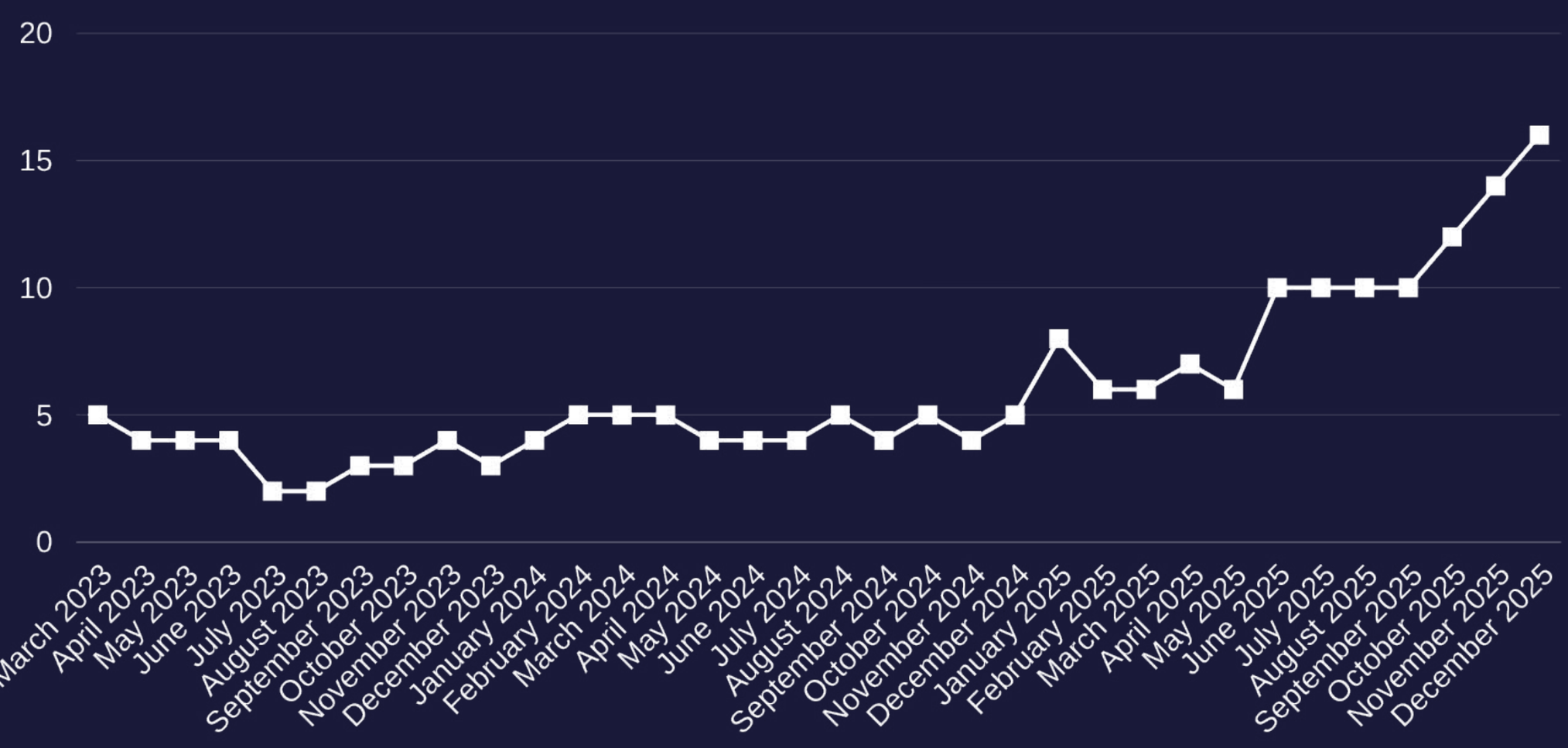
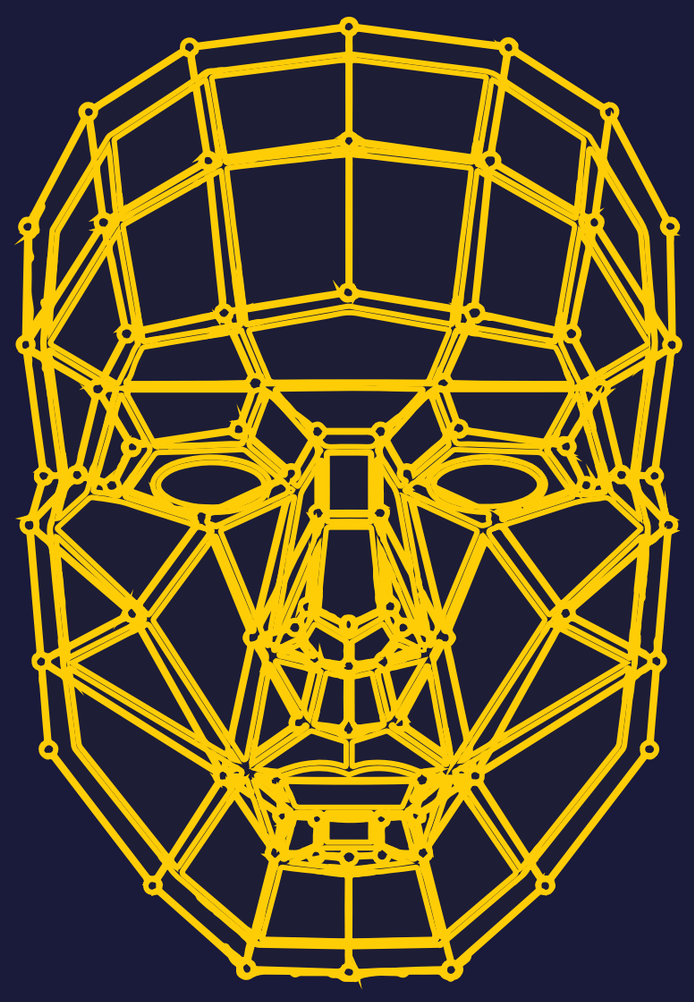
AI-GENERATED DISINFORMATION HITS A NEW RECORD

The share of disinformation content created or manipulated with AI has reached a new record. Out of 1.605 fact-checking articles, 252 focused on such content, representing 16% of the total.



The share of AI-generated disinformation has steadily increased over the past months. This technology has allowed the creation of highly emotional, realistic - yet false - content about current events and issues. Such content is widely shared for two main reasons: first, its strong potential for monetizing engagement in social media platforms; second, its effectiveness in further polarizing public debate for the benefit of extremist or adversarial forces. Broader and more organised disinformation campaigns (eg. Russian war propaganda) are also increasingly relying on AI content as well, as it allows the rapid and low-cost production of convincing fakes.



DISINFORMATION ON THE EUROPEAN UNION

In December 2025, the most circulated disinformation narratives about the EU exploited current events to portray it as an unpopular, autocratic and weak entity, governed by a corrupted and hypocritical leadership.

The protests in Bulgaria were widely depicted as the country's desire to leave the EU, while in reality they were about corruption. The fine imposed on X under the DSA was presented as a way to enact censorship on free speech (despite being issued for the deceptive "blue checkmark" system, lack of transparency and data access), and in general the EU was accused of arresting people for their ideas (the UK as well was a target of a similar campaign). Farmers' protests were framed as a "rebellion against the EU" and their dimension and impact was exaggerated with AI-generated content and old, unrelated videos and images. Italian PM Giorgia Meloni allegedly reclaimed Italy's gold reserves from the EU Central Bank, to give them to the Italian State, and the limit at 10k euros for cash payments was presented as the end of financial freedom in Europe.

Regarding the EU political leadership, a viral claim alleged that President Ursula von der Leyen left the Parliament after Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán allegedly exposed damaging information about her. In addition, a viral AI generated image depicted Vice President Kaja Kallas - known for her strong position against Russia for its aggression against Ukraine - as a Soviet pioneer.

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EVERY CHRISTMAS, CHRISTIANITY IS UNDER ATTACK IN EUROPE

European governments and the EU have also been secondary targets of xenophobic and Islamophobic disinformation campaigns, accused of being too lenient towards immigration. As in previous years, the Christmas season was exploited to spread the Islamophobic claim that Muslim people threaten Christian traditions across Europe while European politicians did nothing about it. Misleading videos contributed to spread the claim that Muslim people were actively invading or attacking Christmas markets, calling for Islamic jihad and destroying Christmas trees. AI-generated content was also used to disseminate fear and fuel the narrative that Muslim immigrants are against Christmas.

These false news, aimed at portraying Europe as overrun by violent Muslim migrants, are consistent with the “Great Replacement” conspiracy theory, according to which Europe is losing its identity because of so-called “ethnic substitution”. The theory is supported by far-right political parties in Europe as well as by the current US administration, which mentioned it in its National Security Strategy, partly as a potential reason to back-off from Nato alliances in the future. On an international level, Islamophobic, antisemitic and anti-immigration content was spread following the massacre of Bondi Beach in Sydney, for example falsely claiming that Muslims celebrated the attack by shooting fireworks or that the terrorist was an Israeli citizen.

**In December 2025 various false news circulated in relation to the war in Ukraine, which remains a focus for pro-Russian disinformation, but no major changes in the disinformation narratives have been observed by EDMO.*

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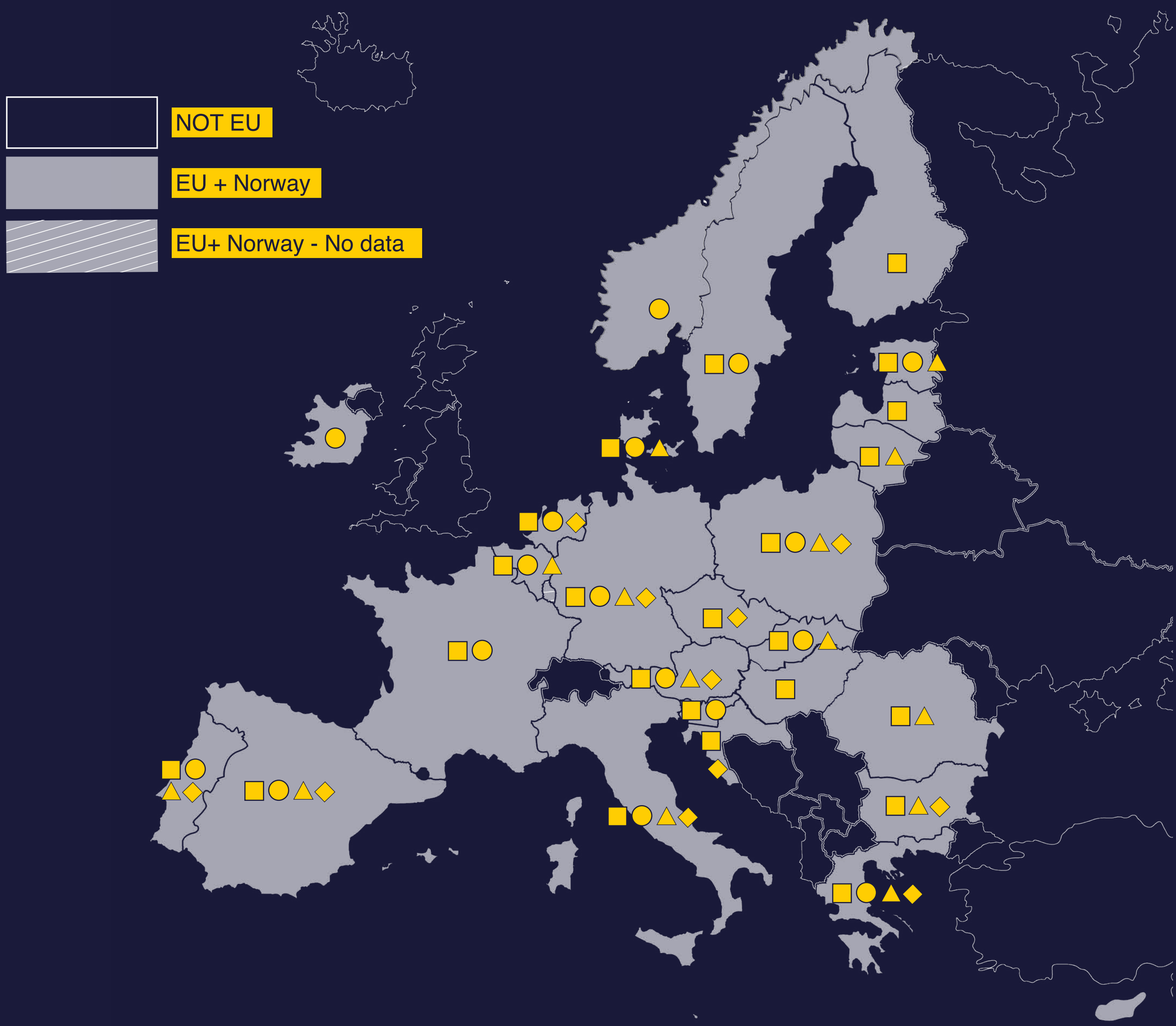
THE FOUR FALSE STORIES WITH THE WIDEST CIRCULATION IN THE EU IN DECEMBER, BASED ON THE FACT-CHECKERS' REPORTS,

- ■ Images and videos proving that Muslim people are attacking Christmas markets in Europe
- ● Disinformation on the identity of the shooter of Bondi Beach, Sydney
- ▲ Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky bought the villa of Bill Cosby
- ◆ Bulgaria is protesting against the adoption of Euro



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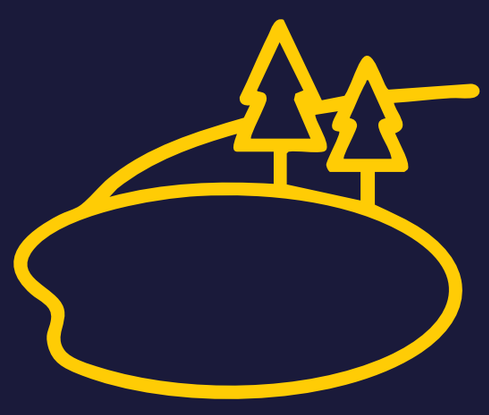
THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISINFORMATION STORIES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL:

Teacher Enoch Burke has been sentenced to life in prison for his beliefs about transgender people.

Foreigners do not have the right to assemble in Germany.

Mass uncontrolled immigration and Ukrainian refugees have brought HIV back to Estonia.



The emptying of artificial lakes in Romania is part of a depopulation drive to take over resources.

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METHODOLOGY

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

Reference period: 1-31 December 2025. Number of respondents: 38. Main editors of this brief: Lucia Bertoldini and Tommaso Canetta, Pagella Politica/Facta.

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