



European Digital Media Observatory

ORBÁN'S FALL SENDS SHOCKWAVES IN DISINFORMATION'S EUROPEAN ECOSYSTEM

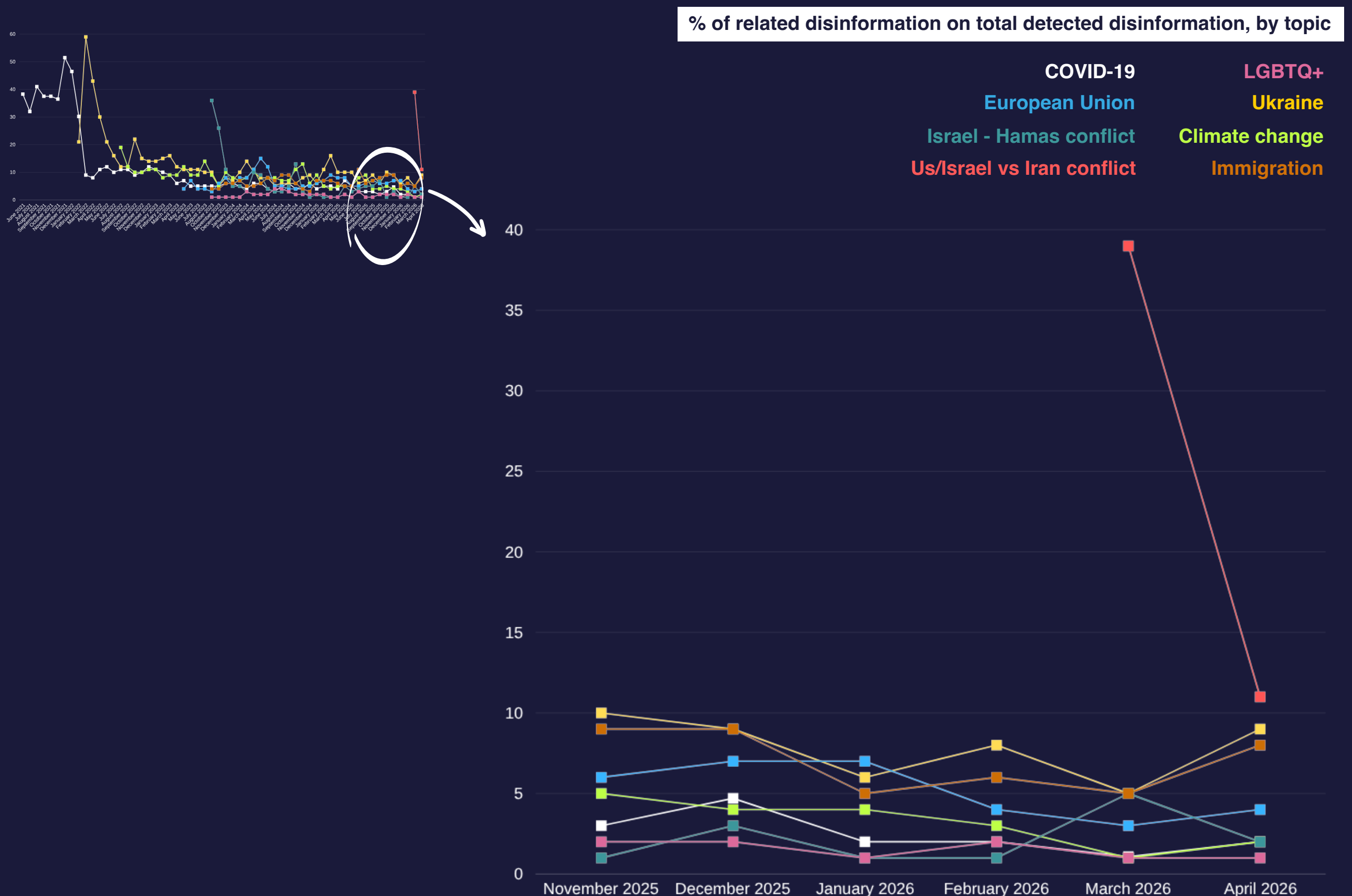
Monthly brief no. 59 – EDMO fact-checking network

INCREASE OF DISINFORMATION ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE AND ON IMMIGRATION

The 34 organizations* part of the EDMO fact-checking network that contributed to this brief published a total of 1,644 fact-checking articles in April 2026. Of these articles, 174 (11%) focused on the war between Israel/ USA and Iran, 156 (9%) on Ukraine-related disinformation; 132 (8%) on disinformation related to immigration; 74 (4%) on disinformation related to the EU; 39 (2%) on the crisis in Gaza; 31 (2%) on climate change-related disinformation; 29 (2%) on COVID-19-related disinformation; and 23 (1%) on disinformation about LGBTQ+ and gender issues.

During the month of April, the war between the USA, Israel and Iran was the most targeted topic by disinformation; however, false news on the matter plummeted from 39% recorded in March. False news related to the crisis in Gaza also decreased by three percentage points. Meanwhile, disinformation's focus seemed to shift back to the war in Ukraine (the share of false news raised by four percentage points) and to the topic of immigration (also in this case, false news increased by three percentage points).

The share of disinformation on the other topics monitored by these briefs remained stable, with only minor fluctuations.



* Organizations that contributed to this brief: AFP, APA, CORRECTIV, Delfi Lithuania, Delfi Estonia, Demagog.org.pl, Demagog.cz, Demagog.sk, dpa, DW, EFE Verifica, Ellinika Hoaxes, Facta/Pagella Politica, Fact Check Cyprus, Factcheck Vlaanderen, Faktabaari, Funky Citizens, Infoveritas, Källkritikbyrån, Knack, Lakmusz, Maldita.es, Medizin transparent, Newtral, Oštro, Polígrafo, Pravda Association, Provereno Media, Re:Baltica, The Journal FactCheck, TjekDet, VerificaRTVE, Verificat, 15min.

TWO INTERESTING DROPS IN MONITORED DISINFORMATION TRENDS

It is often the case that disinformation follows hot topics in the media. That is what happened with false news regarding the war between the USA, Israel and Iran; with the media partially diverting their focus from it, disinformation circulated on the matter also decreased. Lack of attention towards the conflict is probably the reason why false news on the crisis in Gaza also dropped. In contrast, the war in Ukraine still gained more attention from disinformation actors, partly because of the electoral debate in Hungary and Bulgaria (see slide n.4) and their consequences on sanctions against Russia and economic support to Kyiv. False news on immigration took an Islamophobic turn during the Easter period, and they are likely the reason for an increase in the circulation of such disinformation.

Another interesting phenomenon recorded in April was the decrease of AI-generated content (see slide n.6); this might be due to the lack of crisis or big events that characterized the past months (the Venezuela and Greenland crises in January, the Olympics in February and the beginning of the war on Iran in March) as well as to the discontinuation of OpenAI's Sora generating video app.



DISINFORMATION ON THE ELECTIONS IN HUNGARY AND BULGARIA



As anticipated in the 58th EDMO brief, disinformation across Europe heavily targeted the Hungarian elections. Before the vote, false news mostly supported the pro-Kremlin and far-right party Fidesz: e.g. claims circulated that ex PM Viktor Orbán terminated all agreements with the EU, and that Hungary joined the BRICS group. As outlined by experts, counter-disinformation efforts managed to pre-empt many attacks, while Fidesz as well as the USA drove the narrative according to which the EU was carrying out foreign interference.

After the vote, pro-Russian disinformation targeted the newly elected PM Péter Magyar, and false news claimed that his ex-wife Judit Varga published a book accusing him of abusing their children (see slide n.7) and other despicable actions. Other claims circulated that Magyar won only thanks to his alleged Jewish faith, that he adopted “woke” ideological measures in order to unlock European funds and that his party’s vice-president had a connection to Jeffrey Epstein. A video also went viral allegedly showing a crowd of Africans arriving in Budapest just after the elections.



As showcased by BROD’s report, disinformation focused on discrediting Euro-Atlantic institutions as well as Ukraine and its president Volodymyr Zelensky. Attempts at discrediting the leader of Progressive Bulgaria Rumen Radev — then winner of the election — were also detected. False news circulated that the Soviet anthem was played at the closing campaign event of Progressive Bulgaria, and that his candidates are former State Security collaborators. According to experts contacted by EDMO, disinformation about Bulgaria joining the Euro-area — already detected in December 2025 — is expected to persist in the next months.

FALSE NEWS CONSTANTLY TARGET THE WAR IN UKRAINE

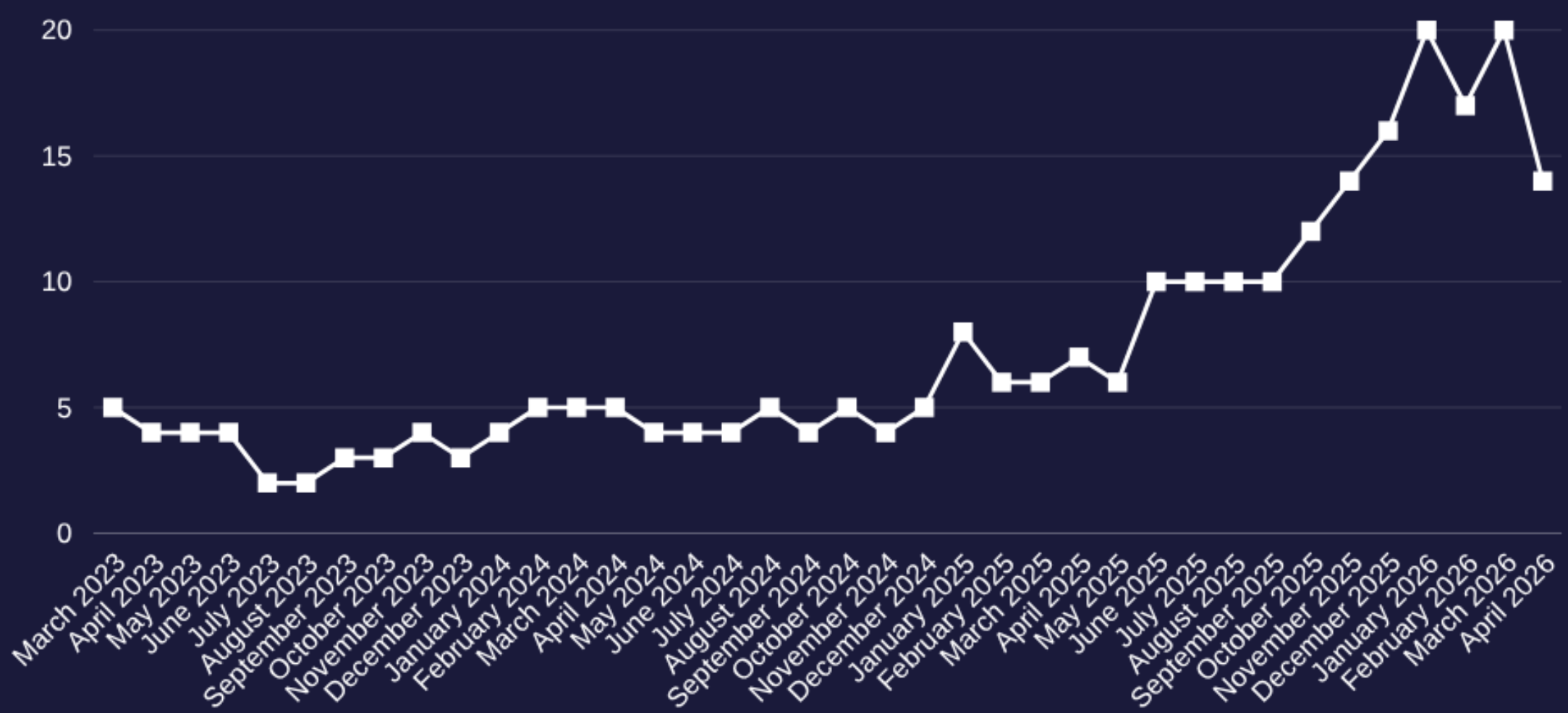
According to EDMO's monthly monitoring activity, the war in Ukraine has always been a constant target of disinformation. In April 2026, recurrent themes targeting Ukrainians as well as Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky (see slide n.7) circulated throughout Europe. The most circulated false claims were that Ukraine was the third-biggest market in Europe for Bentley cars in 2025, that the Ukrainian Ambassador to USA was framed for stealing a wine bottle at the White House correspondents' dinner, and that the king of Sweden refused to shake hands with Zelensky.

There was an increase in false news related to the Hungarian elections in an anti-Ukrainian slant. Ex PM Viktor Orbán unfoundedly suggested that explosives found near a key gas pipeline in Serbia were evidence of Ukrainian sabotage; in the same days, an AI picture circulated featuring Orbán with Russian president Vladimir Putin, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Serbian president Aleksandar Vučić reaching an alleged deal to protect the shared gas pipeline. Before the elections, pro-Fidesz media misleadingly presented an interview by Ukraine's ambassador to Budapest as if he threatened Hungary with destabilization. Meanwhile, other disinformation channels also spread the false news that newly elected PM Magyar planned to revoke Ukrainians' work permits in Hungary.

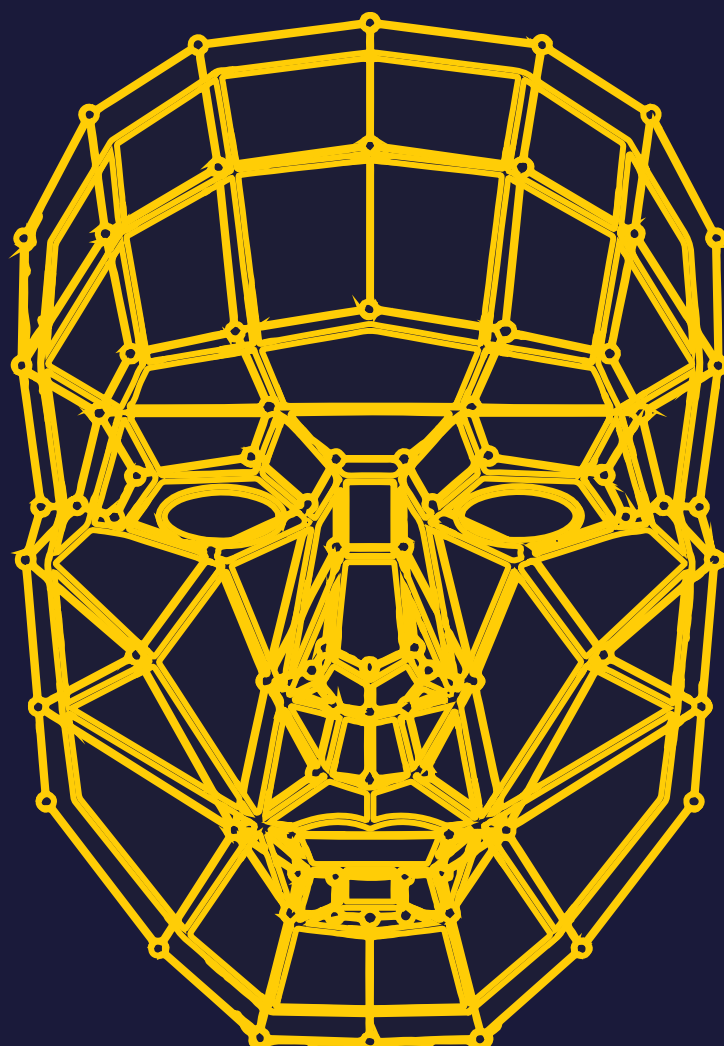


AI-GENERATED DISINFORMATION DECREASES

The share of disinformation content created or manipulated using AI has decreased by six percentage points compared to April, and it went back to the levels registered in November 2025. Out of 1,644 fact-checking articles, 236 focused on this type of content, representing 14% of the total.

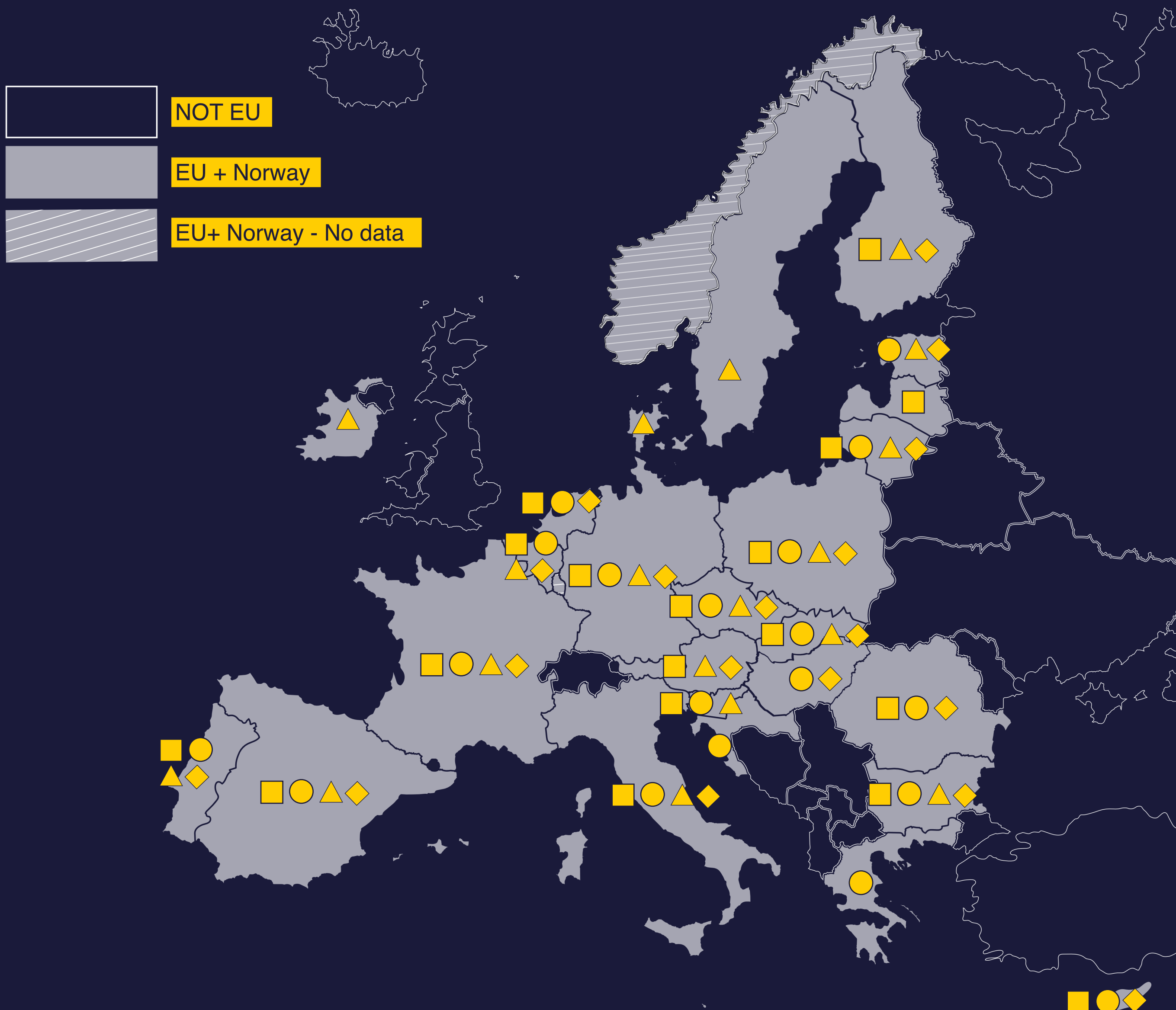


The launch of Nasa’s Artemis II mission drove a comeback of moon landing conspiracy theory, and AI was used multiple times to generate denialist false news. Through AI technology, a new trend was also boosted across various countries, depicting Italian PM Giorgia Meloni as an international anti-USA and anti-Israel icon (see slide n.8). As was the case for March, AI was used to generate content in relation to the war between the USA, Israel and Iran.



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

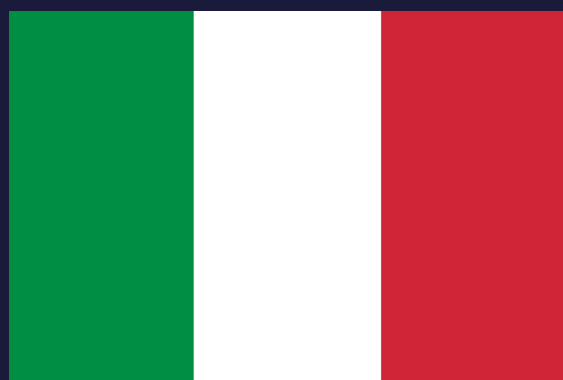
- AI-generated images related to Artemis II mission
- Judit Varga, ex-wife of Hungary's newly elected PM, wrote a book accusing him of abusing their children
- ▲ Misleading content framing the shooting at the correspondents' dinner as a staged attack or a false flag operation
- ◆ False BBC report on stolen painting seen in Zelensky's background



THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISINFORMATION STORIES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL:



AI video of Italian PM
Giorgia Meloni
criticizing Trump



German Armed Forces
disposed that German men
need to report their departure
before leaving the country



A Muslim woman
refused to shake hands
with Queen Máxima



Military threats are a pretext for
removing Poles from certain
areas so that they can be
settled by Jews or Ukrainians



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: 1-30 April 2026. Number of respondents: 34. Main editors of this brief: Lucia Bertoldini and Tommaso Canetta, Pagella Politica/Facta.

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