



TACKLING DISINFORMATION AND INFORMATION MANIPULATION

FAKE
FAKE
FACT

JUNE 2024

Democracy is one of the fundamental values of our European Union. It is at the heart of our open and transparent societies. In the European Union, citizens can freely express their views, participate in democratic life, and choose their political representatives. However, false information has increased in recent years and can affect various aspects of our lives: health, public security, trust in democracy, climate and the environment, migration and fundamental rights and values that underpin our societies.



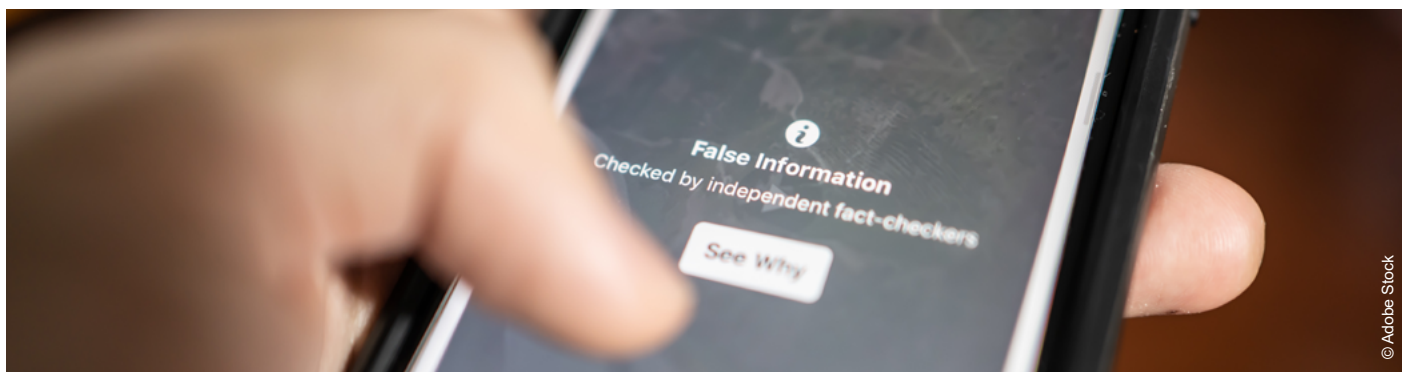
DEFINITIONS

DISINFORMATION

False or misleading content spread with the intention to deceive or secure economic or political gain, and which may cause public harm.

MISINFORMATION

False or misleading content shared without harmful intent although the effects can still be harmful.



EU CITIZENS' PERCEPTION:

78%

are concerned about the possibility of people basing their voting decision on disinformation

72%

are concerned about the possibility of elections being manipulated through cyberattacks

70%

are concerned about the possibility of foreign countries influencing elections covertly



**8 out of 10
EUROPEANS**

agree that news or information that misrepresent reality or is even false is a problem for democracy.

Source: [Standard 100 – Autumn 2023](#)

Source: [Flash Eurobarometer 528 Citizenship and democracy](#)



HOW IS THE EU RESPONDING?

The EU is countering disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference by strengthening its strategic communication, taking a whole society approach. In this context, it is also important that citizens have access to quality news and information they can trust. Our response is centred around:

Regulating and enforcing large actors in the digital market, illegal content, labelling advertisement, sharing best practices	Strengthening our democracies and protecting journalists and media pluralism	Providing reliable information and raising awareness about disinformation and our preparedness and response	Building societal resilience against disinformation through media literacy and fact-checking	Cooperating with other institutions, national authorities and third parties
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The most important **actions** the European Union has taken to address disinformation and information manipulation:

 REGULATE THE DIGITAL MARKET TACKLE DISINFORMATION - Implement the EU-wide Code of Practice on disinformation, to which major platforms have signed up - Ensure by implementing the Digital Services Act that platforms assess and mitigate risks, in particular those related to online information and protection of electoral processes - Contribute through the EU Cybersecurity strategy and the Cyber Resilience Act to a secure and safe digitalisation of essential services, such as hospitals, energy grids, transport networks and public administrations	 RAISE AWARENESS AND IMPROVE SOCIETAL RESILIENCE - Raise awareness with campaigns in Europe and beyond to inform of risks, encourage critical thinking and provide practical advice on how to spot and combat disinformation - Encourage active participation of civil society in identifying and exposing disinformation - Support independent media and fact-checkers - Promote cybersecurity awareness and resilience amongst private and public sector across EU
 IMPROVE DETECTION, ANALYSE AND EXPOSE DISINFORMATION - Assess reach and impact of disinformation - Invest in digital tools, data and fact-checking services, data analysis skills and specialised staff within the EU institutions and Member States	 COOPERATE STRONGER AND RESPOND TO DISINFORMATION TOGETHER - Set-up of a Rapid Alert System consisting of EU institutions and Member States to provide alerts on disinformation campaigns, share insights and facilitate coordinated response - Reinforce EU toolbox to counter foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI)



HOW CAN YOU BEST RESPOND TO DISINFORMATION?



Pause



Think

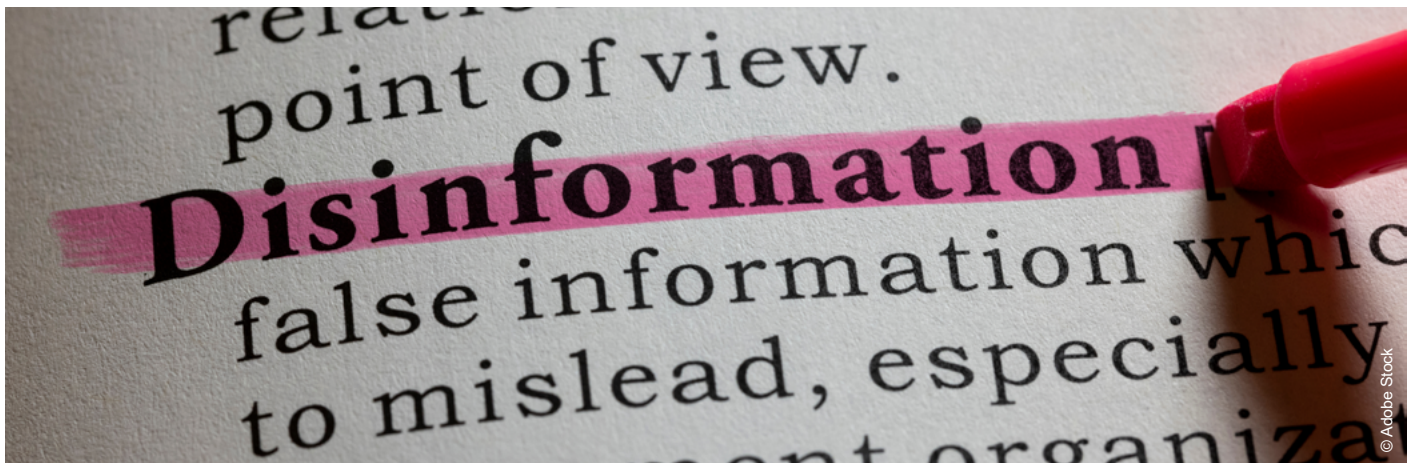


Flag to
platforms

When in doubt **CHECK**

- **CONTENT**
Do the title and content match? Does the content make sense?
- **DATE**
When was it published?
- **MEDIA / URL**
Is it reliable? Does it look authentic?
- **IMAGE**
Does it actually correspond to the information? Does it look authentic?
- **AUTHOR**
Are they reliable/qualified?
- **OTHER SOURCES**
Are other sources reporting on this story? Which ones?

Think before you share! Flag content in breach of community rules!



TIMELINE

March 2015	Launch of the EU's Task Force tasked by the European Council to prepare an action plan on strategic communication
6 April 2016	The High Representative and the Commission present a Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats to counter hostile actions designed to destabilise a region promoting cooperation with and among the Member States, NATO and the EU
6 April 2018	The Commission adopts the Communication on tackling online disinformation
28 June 2018	The European Council invites the High Representative and the Commission to present an action plan for a coordinated EU response to the challenge of disinformation
12 September 2018	The Commission adopts the Securing free and fair European elections package
October 2018	Signature of the Code of Practice on Disinformation : for the first-time representatives of worldwide industry agree, on a voluntary basis, to self-regulatory standards to fight disinformation

5 December 2018	The Commission adopts the Action Plan against disinformation to respond to disinformation and information manipulation targeting EU policies, in cooperation with the European External Action Service (EEAS)
December 2018	Setting up of the Commission Network against Disinformation (NaD) bringing together all Commission services, the EEAS and the European Parliament
5 March 2019	Launch of the The Rapid Alert System to share insights related to disinformation campaigns and coordinate responses among EU institutions and Member States
14 June 2019	The EU presents a Report on the implementation of the Action Plan Against Disinformation
June 2020	The High Representative and the Commission adopt a Joint European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), a hub for fact-checkers, academics and relevant stakeholders is launched
June 2020	The Commission and the High Representative publish the Joint Communication on Tackling COVID-19 disinformation - Getting the facts right
3 December 2020	The Commission adopts the European Democracy Action Plan with focus on elections, media and disinformation
15 December 2020	The Commission adopts a proposal for a Digital Services Act , establishing a new set of EU rules for a safer and more accountable online environment
26 May 2021	The Commission adopts guidance on strengthening the Code of Practice on Disinformation
November 2021	The Commission adopts a proposal for new laws on transparency and targeting of political advertising . The co-legislators reach an agreement in November 2023.
16 June 2022	Signature of the strengthened Code of Practice on Disinformation by major online platforms, emerging and specialised platforms, players in the advertising industry, fact-checkers, research and civil society organisations
16 September 2022	The Commission adopts a proposal for the European Media Freedom Act . Adopted by the co-legislators, it entered into force on 7 May 2024.
16 November 2022	The Digital Services Act enters into force
19 October 2023	The Commission publishes a call for proposals to support EU fact-checkers in identifying and debunking disinformation
12 December 2023	The Commission adopts the Defence of Democracy Package , including a proposal for transparency of interest representation services from third countries.
18 December 2023	The Commission opens formal proceedings against X under the Digital Services Act
17 February 2024	The Digital Services Act rules apply to all platforms
26 March 2024	The Commission adopts guidelines to Very Large Online Platforms and Search Engines to mitigate systemic risks online that may impact the integrity of elections, with specific guidance for the upcoming European Parliament elections in June 2024
30 April 2024	The Commission opens formal proceedings against Facebook and Instagram under the Digital Services Act
8 May 2024	The Commission launches a set of actions to boost awareness-raising of the risks of disinformation and information manipulation and interference
Ongoing	To counteract Russia's large-scale campaign of disinformation in its attempt to destabilise the European Union and its Member States, the EU has adopted sanctions against the Kremlin's disinformation and information manipulation assets and actors