



**STATE OF DISINFORMATION:
SEE REGION IN 2024**

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Contents

- Introduction 4
- Disinformation topics and narratives 4
- Regionally and country specific narratives 5
- Antiscience disinformation 5
- Actors contributing to the spread of disinformation 6
- Tactics and techniques used to spread disinformation 7
- Backlash against fact-checking 8
- Events instigating the spread of disinformation 9
- Antidisinformation update 11
- Fact-checking in the region 11
- Knowledge sharing: Relevant research and events 11
- Legislation overview 13
- Acronym List 14

Introduction

This report provides an annual update for 2024 on the most significant trends, tactics, and actors in the disinformation landscape across the parts of the Southeast Europe region covered by the SEE Check network, building on the baseline established in the 2023 report.¹

Details about each of the represented country's inner trends and developments are available in country reports for the year 2024 prepared by network members [Faktoje](#) (Albania), [Raskrinkavanje](#) (Bosnia and Herzegovina), [Raskrinkavanje](#) (Montenegro) and [Raskrikavanje](#) (Serbia). Country reports are based on direct experiences of the newsrooms' fact-checkers, reporters, analysts and researchers; the disinformation phenomena that they encounter in their daily work, and findings they considered to be the most relevant for the information environments in their countries for the previous year. Additional materials published or contributed by network members [Faktograf](#) (Croatia), [FakeNews Tragač](#) (Serbia) and [Razkrinkavanje](#) (Slovenia) were used in the writing of this report.

The report focuses on updates of regional relevance and common phenomena outlined in the in-country reports, as well as findings and data presented in the fact-checks, analysis, research and other materials regularly published both by individual network members and by the SEE Check network in the covered time period.

Disinformation topics and narratives

This section of the report gives an overview of dominant disinformation topics and narratives based on false claims that use disinformation to impact framing of events or worldviews. The section covers topics and narratives observed by the members of SEE Check network in 2024.

Newsrooms in the region continued to encounter widely circulated global conspiracy theories about "global elites" controlling, enslaving, or depopulating the planet, often targeting organizations such as the United Nations ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)), World Health Organization ([1](#), [2](#)) and World Economic Forum ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)); or individuals like Klaus Schwab and Bill Gates ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)).

These narratives usually have an explicit anti-Western, anti-EU, or illiberal framing. Depending on the specific country context, their ideological or geopolitical dimensions could be more emphasized. For example, "Green Ideology", "Great Replacement" and other elements of the "Woke conspiracy" are more emphasized than anti-Western in countries like Croatia and Slovenia, likely due to the longstanding efforts of the political right to distance them from the Balkans and position them as Western countries.

No prominent new narratives were [observed in 2024](#), but some of the existing ones have had a noticeable, region-wide increase in popularity on social networks and fringe websites, including conspiracy theories about digital currency and climate change denial, "antigender" and anti-migrant narratives.

A region-wide spike in conspiracy theories about digital currency and the alleged abolition of cash payments has portrayed such developments as a plot by governments or banks to establish surveillance and control over citizens ([1](#), [2](#)). False claims about the introduction of a "digital euro" in Croatia ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)) emerged as part of a broader narrative framework depicting the European Union as a totalitarian dystopia that seeks to silence political dissent and censor free speech ([1](#)).

Increasingly, false or misleading interpretations of EU legislation are circulating on social media, ranging from rules on EU borders and entry to regulatory acts in health, consumer protection, environmental policy, and digital sector ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)). This is a part of a wider surge in anti-EU disinformation narratives, including portrayals of the EU as weak or "collapsing," claims that various countries are leaving the Union ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)), allegations that it supports fascism or Nazism ([1](#), [2](#)), and assertions that it acts as a destabilizing force in contexts such as Ukrainian or Georgian ([1](#), [2](#)).

¹ SEE Check Network. "State of Disinformation in the SEE Region: SEE Check's Report." *SEE Check*, 2024. https://seecheck.org/index.php/2024/12/31/state_of_disinformation_see_region/

The anti-Western framing of disinformation narratives has long been a part of mainstream discourse in Serbia, but has intensified following the large student and civic protests² that government officials and pro-government media attempt to discredit by presenting them as a “colored revolution” orchestrated by Western powers (1, 2). In Montenegro, a rise of anti-migrant narratives was noticeable in anti-EU context (1, 2). In BiH the anti-Western paradigm was particularly manifested through “antigender” disinformation (1, 2, 3, 4) – although disinformation targeting LGBT+ and women’s rights has been on the increase in the whole region (1, 2, 3, 4).

Regionally and country specific narratives

Historical revisionism around the 1990s wars and disinformation narratives rooted in ethnonationalism remained dominant in political discourse in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Serbia and Montenegro (8, 9), often peaking around anniversaries of war crimes or politically charged historical events. In 2024, a particularly intense disinformation campaign targeted the UN Resolution on International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica [adopted](#) in May. In Serbia, a false claim that this document labels Serbs as “genocidal people” (1, 2, 3, 4) has been intensively promoted by political actors and pro-government media and repeatedly instrumentalized to vilify civic protests and portray them as supportive of “labelling of Serbs as genocidal”.

Albania remains particularly sensitive to disinformation about the Serbia-Kosovo relations, especially narratives inciting fear of a war between the two countries, or a broader conflict in the Western Balkans, that begin to spread whenever tensions escalate in northern Kosovo or dialogue efforts stall (1, 2, 3).

Antiscience disinformation

Climate change and climate science denial have continued to increase across the region (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). These narratives are often paired with conspiracy theories about technologies that are claimed to influence the weather and atmospheric phenomena (“geoengineering”, HAARP, “high energy weapons” and similar – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). Many of these claims are embedded within broader conspiracy frameworks about a “totalitarian green agenda,” which downplay or deny climate change by portraying it as a fabricated problem designed to justify population control and societal repression (1, 2, 3, 4).

Persistent false claims linking the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine to autism continue to circulate in the region (1, 2, 3, 4). A rise in disinformation about the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine has been observed as well (1, 2, 3). These narratives [continue to spread](#), while outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases in the region occur. In 2024, Bosnia and Herzegovina saw [a measles outbreak](#) with around 7,500 cases in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and 300 in Republika Srpska, while Serbia reported nearly 900 cases. Spanning 2023 and 2024, Serbia and Croatia experienced unprecedented pertussis outbreaks, with roughly 3,000 and 6,500 cases, respectively (1, 2, 3). Several hundred cases were reported [in BiH](#). Disinformation continues to influence the decline of immunization rates, fueling these easily preventable health crises.

Other antimedicine narratives continue to revolve around “Big pharma” conspiracy theories, focusing particularly on serious illnesses like cancer. Evidence-based cancer treatments and diagnostics, including chemotherapy and mammography, continue to be portrayed as dangerous (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6), while untested or certifiably ineffective “natural solutions” are praised as healthier options (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8). Flat Earth conspiracy theories are also still present, and even on the rise in some countries (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6).

2 SEE Check Network. [Disinformation Report: Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2024](#). SEE Check, 2025; [Disinformation Report: Albania in 2024](#). SEE Check, 2025; [Disinformation Report: Montenegro in 2024](#). SEE Check, 2025; Raskrikavanje. [Šest novina, više od 1.400 manipulacija: Kako su izgledale naslovnice 2024. godine](#). Raskrikavanje.rs, 2024.

Actors contributing to the spread of disinformation

This section of the report provides an overview of the main actors involved in creating and disseminating disinformation, with a particular focus on those whose influence extends beyond national borders.

The composition of the key sources and amplifiers of disinformation in the region remained largely unchanged in 2024. Social media continued to serve as the primary channels for disseminating disinformation, particularly conspiracy theories, across the region. Likewise, various types of news media, including mainstream commercial outlets and public broadcasters, continue to exhibit disregard for professional journalistic standards and a propensity to spread misleading or false information, typically driven by political and/or financial motives. Anonymous click-farms, obscure online portals and fringe websites that spout conspiracy theories remain a significant presence in the online information ecosystem.

Disinformation is often made more visible on accounts of public figures or social media influencers and content creators, but social media users also contribute significantly to its spread. While Facebook still dominates this space, especially in spreading conspiracy theories, the influence of other platforms is growing significantly. In Albania, Instagram ranks as the second most used platform for spreading disinformation, partly due to its close integration with Facebook, allowing content to be simultaneously shared across both platforms, increasing its reach and impact. In 2024, Fakoje identified a growing number of viral Instagram posts containing AI-modified content, such as deepfakes, edited images, and misleading infographics. In Montenegro, political activists continue to make extensive use of anonymous X accounts to disseminate political disinformation and hate speech.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Telegram became the second most frequently rated source of disinformation by Raskrinkavanje – a rise from 20th place in 2022, while TikTok moved from 51st to 10th place in a single year. In Serbia, TikTok profiles have been increasingly used for political disinformation and hate speech campaigns targeting the students' and citizens' protests, while in Croatia targeting of foreign workers and migrants and [political misinformation campaigns](#) were observed on TikTok. The trend of malignant actors "[migrating](#)" to [TikTok](#) continued across the region. Online media remain significant sources of political misinformation in the region. There have not been significant changes in that respect compared to 2023. Similarly, the political actors prone to spreading conspiracy theories or extensively using disinformation have stayed much the same as in the previous year.

Non-Western actors, particularly Russia, continue to promote anti-EU and anti-NATO narratives within Albanian-language media, often with the use of misinformation and through opaque or unverified outlets. In Serbia, domestic sources of disinformation remained dominant, including major television stations and daily newspapers.³ However, they also continue to amplify disinformation narratives of foreign origin, especially those with pro-Russian viewpoints. Generally, in the Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian (BCMS)-speaking area, a "disinformation hub" described in 2019⁴, centered around pro-government tabloids in Serbia, RTRS/SRNA in Republika Srpska and with the prominent role of Sputnik Srbija, remains the most proliferant source of political disinformation in the region. Significant amplifiers of the same narratives are their "satellite" outlets in Montenegro.

A new addition to this cross-border "ecosystem" is RT Balkan, the Russian state-owned outlet that has maintained a regional online presence since 2022. Its Serbia-based television channel began broadcasting at the end of 2024, with the website also becoming more active at the same time. For example, in 2024 RT website ranked as the 14th most rated source of disinformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, largely due to publishing the same or similar content as the aforementioned hub.

³ See "Events instigating the spread of disinformation" in this report.

⁴ Raskrikavanje. "Šest novina, više od 1.400 manipulacija: Kako su izgledale naslovnice 2024. godine." *Raskrikavanje.rs*, 2024. <https://raskrikavanje.rs/page.php?id=Sest-novina-vise-od-1-400-manipulacija-Kako-su-izgledale-naslovnice-2024--godine-1461>.

Among political actors, members of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS – Srpska napredna stranka) and its close allies frequently amplify disinformation, particularly around electoral processes, protests, and international political developments. Moreover, conspiracy theorists are getting a stronger foothold in Serbian politics, using these platforms to amplify conspiracy narratives that previously appeared mostly in online spaces. For example, in 2024 [Saša Borojević](#), repeatedly rated by fact-checkers from across the region for peddling multiple conspiratory narratives, was elected to the Belgrade City Assembly, from the list of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS). In Slovenia and Croatia, some political actors – usually active on the populist right, both on national and European level – also play a significant role in spreading disinformation and amplifying conspiracy theories, particularly about migrants and minorities ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)). In Slovenia, migrants and foreigners were also targeted with disinformation and hate speech from a militia-like group '[Slovenian Defense Guard](#)'.

Tactics and techniques used to spread disinformation

This section of the report examines the tactics and techniques used to spread false claims and disinformation narratives. It explores the methods, platforms, and channels through which misleading content is amplified, as well as the patterns that allow such narratives to gain traction among different audiences.

As 2024 was “the year of the elections” significant activity was observed in which information manipulation was used in attempts to influence the discourse and election results, or to profit off of heightened interest of the public in political processes. Many of the same tactics of political disinformation that have already been well-documented by the network members in previous election cycles were observed again in 2024.

These include:

- Fake opinion polls, published without any attribution, or referencing made-up polling agencies, observed in yet another election cycle in Montenegro ([1](#), [2](#)).
- Doctored videos published on anonymous social media accounts and used for smear campaigns against political opponents; in Serbia specifically targeting opposition to the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and President Aleksandar Vučić ([1](#)).
- Fabrication of statements falsely ascribed to candidates and other political actors as a tactic of discreditation continued to be common in Bosnia and Herzegovina ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)).
- Anonymous websites set up with the sole purpose to promote specific parties or candidates and discredit others in BiH ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)).
- Social media accounts that become active exclusively during election periods to amplify disinformation and target opposition leaders, civic activists, and student protest organizers in Serbia and similar “[sleeper](#)” social media accounts in BiH. [Some social media accounts](#) did the same, mostly using hate speech in their content.
- Coordinated inauthentic behavior, i.e. the use of bots and/or fake accounts on social networks was particularly intensive in Croatia where, following reporting from Gong and Faktograf, platforms removed thousands of such accounts: Meta removed [150 fake profiles and pages](#) from Facebook and Instagram, linking them to members of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ – Hrvatska demokratska zajednica) Youth; TikTok [removed thousands of inauthentic followers](#) of Dragan Primorac, HDZ's candidate in the presidential elections, as well as a [viral anonymous account](#) running a shadow defamation campaign against presidential candidate Ivana Kekin.

Conspiracy theories continue to be largely “imported” from foreign websites and social media accounts. Much of this “source material” originates from U.S.-based conspiracy platforms like Your News Wire (rebranded as NewsPunch in 2018 and as The People's Voice in 2023) that remain prominent sources of such narratives in the region ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)). They are typically translated into local languages – often with crude automatic translation, producing incoherent results – and then disseminated through social networks by conspiracy influencers and fringe websites. Disinformation spread on social media is often taken and translated from outside sources and appears simultaneously or almost simultaneously in several countries in the region.

Such viral disinformation that appears in other languages, especially in English, quickly reaches the region and

spreads, sometimes simultaneously, in all its countries and languages. This is especially true when it comes to topics that already have passionate “believers”, like conspiratorial narratives about the WEF, Davos or Klaus Schwab creating the “New World Order”. One among many such examples are the recordings of a Danish-Iranian internet personality Damon Imani, who made a video montage of him insulting Klaus Schwab on the 2024 Davos forum stage. The video immediately went viral in many languages, including all the countries in the region ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)), getting its first translation in less than a day after it was [published](#).

Across the region, commercial news media, as well as anonymous websites, continue to rely on sensationalist, low-quality content as a primary tactic to attract attention and drive engagement. Clickbait remains the attention-grabbing manipulation of choice, with false or misleading headlines exploiting emotionally charged topics such as tragic events, violent crimes, or political developments, or creating a false impression that something disturbing took place (clickbaits about celebrities’ deaths or serious illnesses remain among the most present tactic in this respect). The practice of publishing unverified claims to prioritize speed and “clickability” at the expense of reliability has also continued.

Online scams have been on the rise in 2024, with common patterns appearing in the whole region, causing direct financial losses and risks to public health, but also contributing to further erosion of trust in media, online platforms, and public institutions. At the same time, there is little evidence that large online platforms are undertaking any proportional meaningful action to tackle the problem at scale.

Scammers continue to use “clone” websites or impersonate trusted brands, media outlets, public figures and institutions to manipulate users and commit identity theft, financial fraud, or sell fake products. Other tactics that blur the line between disinformation and false advertising have been observed – for example, fraudulent ads masked as sensationalist clickbaits about deaths of public figures, as reported by fact-checkers in [Montenegro](#).

Fake giveaways most often appear on Facebook ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)), while bogus health products, “miracle” cures and supplements are advertised on various platforms using similar manipulation tactics ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#)). Cryptocurrency scams also surged in the region, typically relying on fabricated interviews in which public figures allegedly disclosed lucrative financial secrets during live broadcasts ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)). In Croatia, a “[recovery scam](#)” has been observed – a particularly vile fraud where victims of financial scams are further defrauded by a “company” promising to recover the funds they lost by falling for other online scams.

Another trend on the rise in the whole region is the use of increasingly sophisticated tools such as AI-generated or deepfake videos that manipulate the likenesses of recognizable public figures – doctors, celebrities, politicians, journalists, scientists, etc. – to falsely depict them endorsing products or promoting fraudulent “investment strategies” ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)). AI-produced or modified content is also on the rise as a manipulation tactic for various other purposes, like providing “evidence” for conspiracy theories, fabricating war footage, or compromising public figures falsely depicting them in controversial contexts ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#)).

Backlash against fact-checking

Across the Western Balkans, 2024 saw a continuation in political and media backlash against fact-checking organizations, accompanied by coordinated disinformation campaigns, public attacks, and institutional pressure.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the Press and Online Media Council of BiH launched a [form](#) for reporting alleged violations of media freedom on social media, created within the project “Building Trust in the Media in Southeast Europe: Supporting Journalism as a Public Good” funded by UNESCO/EU. In a [press release](#) accompanying the form, the Press council stated that media content is “unjustifiably labeled as disinformation” on social networks and that “journalistic texts are often labeled as disinformation and are thus removed or their presence on social networks is reduced, while, on the other hand, they do not violate any of the provisions of the Code of Conduct for Print and Online Media of BiH”. While not explicitly mentioned, these claims imply that fact-checkers participating in Meta’s Third Party Fact-checking program arbitrarily “censor” legitimate journalism rather than labelling disinformation based on established facts. Furthermore, the false claims about journalistic content

being “removed” as a result of fact-checking further endorse the narrative about fact-checking as censorship, reinforcing unfounded allegations and lending institutional weight to the backlash. These developments all are the more concerning given that the Press Council is a body that should be maintaining and elevating professional journalistic standards, seen here using materially false claims in line with disinformation campaigns already waged against fact-checking by various malign actors.

In **Croatia**, Faktograf’s newly launched [Climate Portal](#) was also targeted with claims about “censorship”. Such attacks intensified following [a letter by Mark Zuckerberg to the U.S. Congress](#), widely cited by disinformation actors as proof of political pressure on content moderation. During the European election campaign, Faktograf journalist Andrej Dimitrijević was [publicly attacked](#) by parliamentary representative and candidate Stephen Nikola Bartulica, who made false accusations regarding his work. Separately, journalist Melita Vrsaljko was [physically assaulted at her home](#) following her reporting on illegal waste disposal connected to a local political figure’s family, underscoring the increasingly hostile environment.

In **Montenegro**, media outlets whose content was labeled as disinformation frequently responded by branding fact-checkers as “mercenaries,” echoing broader smear campaigns against NGOs. A proposed [“foreign agents”](#) law, similar to legislation advanced in Georgia, was widely perceived as an attempt to stigmatize and potentially silence civil society organizations, including those engaged in fact-checking and media accountability.

In **Serbia**, attacks intensified throughout 2024, largely driven by pro-government media and political actors. Fact-checking groups were repeatedly accused of censorship and bias, particularly after debunking viral falsehoods related to elections, protests, and the Srebrenica resolution. Raskrikavanje faced a lawsuit from the pro-government tabloid Kurir, which alleged reputational harm after Raskrikavanje exposed manipulative front-page practices.

In **Slovenia**, anti-fact-checking rhetoric has been amplified by senior political figures like Janez Janša, leader of the right-wing Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) party, and Milan Zver, an MEP from his party. They publicly labeled Oštro as an “official censor” during a press conference and repeated that claim many times after that.

Events instigating the spread of disinformation

This section of the report analyzes events that have been identified as specific triggers for disinformation. It includes both current events and recurring patterns identified by fact-checking organizations, showing how particular developments catalyze the spread of misleading or false narratives.

Several events incited disinformation, from international conflicts to domestic politics, natural disasters and disease outbreaks.

In Serbia, mass protests had the government and pro-government media responding by frequent use of false narratives to attack the critics and the protestors. The first “wave” of protests was related to the Jadar lithium mine project the Serbian government signed with Rio Tinto company, but halted in 2022 after mass [environmental protests](#) “Ne damo Jadar” across Serbia. In July 2024 the Constitutional court declared the government’s decision to stop the project unconstitutional. The government then announced that it will be renewed, leading to a new outburst of mass protests in the country and with it, disinformation against the protestors and government critics, as well as the project itself ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)). Serbian professor Dinko Gruhonjić faced nationalist backlash over misinterpreted remarks, which also provoked protests.

The collapse of a newly reconstructed canopy at a bus stop in Novi Sad on November 1st resulted in the deaths of 16 people. The subsequent mass protests across Serbia also became a central target of disinformation. Pro-government media and officials framed the protests as being orchestrated by foreign actors aiming to destabilize the country, rather than acknowledging the underlying public anger over corruption, negligence, and lack of accountability.

Albania remains particularly sensitive to disinformation about the Serbia-Kosovo relations, especially narratives inciting fear of a war between the two countries, or a broader conflict in the Western Balkans, that begin to spread whenever tensions escalate in northern Kosovo or dialogue efforts stall (1, 2, 3). Ethnonationalist narratives were also observed in BiH in disinformation about supposed gathering of *chetniks*, during the campaigns for the [Local elections](#) (1, 2, 3, 4), false claims about a terrorist attack in Bosanska Krupa and similar (1, 2, 3).

The opening ceremony of the **Olympic Games** in Paris triggered a surge of disinformation across the region (1, 2, 3), linking the event to occultism, esoteric rituals, satanism, ritual sacrifice, and apocalyptic symbolism (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Some narratives also revived similar conspiracy claims about the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympic Games, which were retrospectively portrayed as a performance that “announced” the COVID-19 pandemic eight years later (1). Accusations of satanism come as a part of broader, recurring conspiracy narratives alleging satanic symbolism in artistic events and cultural productions (1, 2). Apocalyptic narratives surrounding the ceremony were further amplified by religiously themed falsehoods, including fabricated claims that the artistic director was struck by lightning and fake reports of large-scale religious protests against the event (1, 2, 3).

Another line of disinformation following the Olympics and other 2024 sporting events focused on sex and gender. The [opening performance](#) was framed by some actors as overtly sexual and was incorporated into narratives portraying it as immoral, satanic, or part of a supposed “gay agenda.” Additionally, a wave of disinformation targeted boxers Imane Khelif and Lin Yu-ting, generating false claims about their gender (1, 2, 3, 4) and fueling broader transphobic narratives (1, 2).

The death of Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny, who died in prison in February 2024, led to a series of false news stories in Albania, as well as region-wide false claims that his death was linked to COVID-19 vaccines (1, 2, 3, 4).

After the **fall of Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria** at the end of November 2024, he fled the country and reportedly went to Moscow in early December. The event triggered several false claims in most of the countries in the region, ranging from falsely presenting his old photographs as if they were recently taken in Russia, to AI images falsely presented as released prisoners, to articles white-washing the political prosecution, torture and murder during his regime. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5),

Natural disasters continue to be followed by spread of disinformation. This includes Jablanica floods in BiH, DANA phenomenon in Spain, hurricanes in the USA, heat waves and other extreme weather events (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6).

The 2024 European Parliament elections were held across the European Union from 6 to 9 June. Like the U.S. presidential election, the European vote triggered significant disinformation in the region. Prominent narratives portrayed the EU as collapsing or on the brink of disintegration, with claims of impending civil unrest in countries such as Germany and France.

In Croatia, the European elections took place amid a full electoral cycle that included parliamentary elections in April and the first round of presidential elections in December. Migration and gender-related disinformation featured strongly throughout the year, alongside campaign related manipulations. Although former Croatian MEPs Mislav Kolakušić and Ivan Sinčić, both prominent spreaders of conspiracy narratives, failed to secure seats in the 2024 European elections, other political actors prone to disinformation rhetoric, such as Marin Miletić and Stephen Stjepo Bartulica, remained influential. A particularly intense disinformation campaign targeted Ivana Kekić, the presidential candidate of *Možemo!*.

In Slovenia, the European elections coincided with three advisory referendums on cannabis use, voluntary euthanasia, and the preferential vote, while a planned referendum on the construction of a second reactor at the Krško nuclear power plant (JEK 2) was ultimately canceled. Disinformation targeting minorities and human rights – especially anti-migrant narratives – continued to be amplified by right-wing political actors, including members of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), and affiliated media outlets. Notably, Branko Grims, known for conspiracy-driven rhetoric, secured a seat in the European Parliament. *Razkrinkavanje.si* monitored the campaign and identified false or misleading claims related to climate change, the World Health Organization, and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

The 2024 U.S. presidential election served as a major trigger for disinformation across the region. Fake photos

and videos circulated widely, alongside ideologically charged fabrications and conspiracy-driven content targeting primarily Democratic candidates. False narratives included fabricated election results, manipulated statements by U.S. officials and coordinated attempts to undermine the “legitimacy” of Kamala Harris after she replaced Joe Biden as the Democratic Party’s nominee late in the campaign. False claims questioned her legitimacy, accused her of supporting a so-called “depopulation agenda,” and alleged involvement in voter fraud. In contrast, falsehoods about Republican candidate Donald Trump, who ultimately won the election, were largely benign or even laudatory, including embellished imagery and exaggerated claims about “game changing” support from Serbian diaspora. While conspiracy narratives more often depicted him as a victim, particularly following the assassination attempt at a Pennsylvania rally in July, some negative narratives were observed – for example, manipulated images of Trump with Jeffrey Epstein. However, similar or even more baseless claims also targeted Harris, who did not have any real-life connections with Epstein, unlike Trump. Misleading narratives about Elon Musk appeared after he affiliated himself with Trump, but they tended to portray him positively, making him more a beneficiary than a victim of disinformation.

Presidential elections were held in Romania on 24 November 2024. In December, the Constitutional Court annulled the election, alleging that a Russian influence operation had impacted the vote that brought Calin Georgescu, a fairly obscure candidate that campaigned mostly on social networks, predominantly [TikTok](#), the victory in the first round. Throughout the region, false claims appeared about the election and its aftermath ([1](#), [2](#)) including claims that the EU, rather than Romanian institutions, banning Georgescu from running again ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)).

Antidisinformation update

This section of the report outlines the efforts of stakeholders working to counter disinformation. It covers awareness-raising activities, networking initiatives and programs that improve information exchange. It also highlights research, analysis, policy recommendations and advocacy by civil society and media organizations, knowledge-building projects, and cross-sector collaborations that have had a measurable impact in the region.

Fact-checking in the region

In 2024, network members continued to expand their activities and partnerships, including cross-sectoral collaborations. Cooperation with universities and research institutions, both domestic and international, took place in several countries. Faktoje signed a collaboration agreement with the Department of Journalism and Communication at the Faculty of History and Philology at the University of Tirana, offering internships to journalism students and continuing to implement its Fact-Checking Course. Faktograf cooperated with the Department of Sociology at the University of Zadar on a study on climate disinformation. Zašto ne shared knowledge and collaborated with academic partners within the project [SOS4Democracy](#) that brings together universities, civil society organizations and media outlets based in Ljubljana, Rome, Brussels, Istanbul and Sarajevo.

Raskrinkavanje and FakeNews Tragač worked on a joint study on the spread of AI disinformation and ethics of AI usage in journalism, to be published in 2025. CDT conducted an [opinion poll](#) on disinformation and [also hosted](#) multiple podcasts where disinformation was the subject of discussion, where representatives of institutions and prominent lawyers took part. Oštro held several [workshops on fact-checking](#) for Slovenian, as well as Croatian, journalists and media professionals. Faktograf started a new website, Klimatski portal, dedicated specifically to facts about climate change.

Several network members participated in collaborative projects and initiatives by the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN)): [Election24Check](#) a collaborative fact-checking of disinformation on EU parliamentary elections, producing a joint European database of debunks, prebunks and narrative analyses; [AI@Election](#), a project providing fact-checkers with techniques essential tools for identifying AI generated and digitally altered content, paired with media literacy campaign in local languages; and [Climate Facts Europe](#), a collaboration on fact-checking climate disinformation. Oštro

collaborated with journalists from several European countries in the project [Firehose of Falsehoods](#), initiated by Czech investigative journalism platform Investigace.cz and [VSquare](#), publishing an investigation about the “Creative Society” spreading climate disinformation on a global scale.

Partnerships with online platforms continued within Meta’s Third-Party Fact-Checking program for network members from Albania, Croatia, BiH, Montenegro and Serbia. Faktograf also entered Tik-Tok’s fact-checking partnership and a small Google-funded project, while Oštro participated in a small Tik-Tok’s program, producing educational video-material.

Knowledge sharing: Relevant research and events

On top of their regular fact-checking work, SEE Check members published several relevant research and analysis, including:

- Faktoje: Fighting Russian disinformation after the invasion of Ukraine
- Faktograf: Fabricating Doubt and Persecuting Science: Analysis of Misinformation About the Climate Crisis in Croatia
- Zašto ne: Gender and Identity Based Disinformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- KRIK: Right-Wing Universe in Serbia: Biggest Rivals Support Each Other the Most, Informer the Biggest Hub

Publications where SEE Check members contributed include:

- Towards a Feasible Implementation of the Digital Services Act in the Western Balkans, Partners for Democratic Change Serbia (Maida Ćulahović from “Zašto ne” contributed): Digitalization and Democracy in the Western Balkans, Aspen Institute Germany (Marija Ćosić and Darko Brkan from “Zašto ne” contributed)
- DSA, DMA, AIA and Western Balkans, SHARE Foundation (Maida Ćulahović from “Zašto ne” contributed)

In 2024, several relevant regional or region-focused events were attended or organized by members of SEE Check network, including the following:

- In January, a member of Zašto ne participated in a roundtable on Future of Western Balkans in the digital Europe at Privacy week, organized by Partners for Democratic Change Serbia (Partners Serbia) in Belgrade.
- In February, Center for democratic transition organized a regional conference Between Reality and Deception: Disinformation as a Threat to Democratic Societies. Representatives from FakeNews Tragač, Faktograf, Krik and Zašto ne participated. On the eve of the second anniversary of Russian full-scale invasion on Ukraine, Balkan Investigative Reporting Network organized a conference Disinformation and foreign malign influence in Sarajevo, with participants from several countries in the region and a representative of Zašto ne participating.
- In May, Oštro’s fact-checking project Razkrinkavanje.si received a prize for social innovation at an award ceremony organized by the international organization SozialMarie
- In June, Media in Time festival, organized by Center for media culture in Vinkovci, Croatia, had a particular focus on fact-checking, with Zašto ne representative participating and sharing experiences of fact-checkers in BiH.

The [POINT conference](#), organized annually by Zašto ne in Sarajevo, had its twelfth edition on 24-25 June, featuring panels dedicated to fact-checking, antidisinformation practices and policies in the area of information integrity:

- [The state of fact-checking](#)
- [Disinformation narratives inciting Euroscepticism in Western Balkans](#)
- [Weaponization of Fact-Checking Tropes as a Disinformation Tactic](#)
- [How to get the most out of the DSA and the Code of Practice in the Balkans](#)
- [How to Pull the Plug on Monetizing Disinformation](#)
- [DSA/DMA/CoP/AI Act: Is the SEE region ready?](#)

Several showcase sessions were also dedicated to different aspects of antidisinformation practices, including sessions on [online hoaxes](#) and [fraudulent ad schemes](#), [science disinformation](#) and [the use of AI in fact-checking](#).

[GlobalFact](#), the largest fact-checking summit organized annually by the International Fact-Checking Network (International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN)) at the Poynter Institute, [took place in Sarajevo](#) on June 26-28. GlobalFact11 was organized in partnership with Zašto ne, with several members of the SEE Check network moderating and participating in the panels and workshops.

- In July, [Berlin Process Civil Society & Think Tank Forum 2024](#) was organized in Skopje by the Southeast Europe Association and the Aspen Institute. A representative of Zašto ne participated in the Working Group on Disinformation and Cyber Threats.
- In September, [The Future of Freedom of Information](#) conference was organized by Partners Serbia in Belgrade. Representatives of Zašto ne and CDT participated on a panel about freedom of expression and information. [Kosovo Peace and Democracy Summit](#) organized by New Social Initiative (NSI), Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS), and Sbunker, took place in Pristina. A representative of Zašto ne participated in a panel about tackling disinformation in the Western Balkans.
- In November, [Western Balkans Cyber Policy Dialogue](#) took place in Tirana, with representatives of Zašto ne and Faktoje participating. In Sarajevo, [The Internet Governance Forum](#) was co-organized by Zašto ne on the same month.
- In December, the eighth edition of the annual conference on disinformation, [Disicon](#), organized by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) (NDI) Kosovo, took place in Pristina. A representative of Zašto ne participated in the panel on the intersection between information disorder and interethnic relations.

Legislation overview

This section reviews legislation related to information integrity, with a focus on laws addressing disinformation and the practice of fact-checking. It highlights the regulatory landscape and examines how legal measures intersect with broader efforts to maintain trustworthy information environments.

In April 2024, a special [Commission](#) was established in **Albania's** parliament on the initiative of MPs from the ruling Socialist Party, tasked with coordinating institutional efforts to combat disinformation and foreign interference in democratic processes, while protecting freedom of speech and promoting election integrity and accountability of online platforms. The work of the commission, established without consultations with the opposition or the civil society, was boycotted by the opposition. Until the end of 2024 the commission did not produce any tangible results. In a series of articles, Faktoje documented reactions to the establishment of the commission, criticism of the one-sided nature of the process, the commission's vague objectives and potential implications for freedom of expression ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)).

In March 2024, the Office of the High Representative (OHR) in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** [amended](#) the Election Law, prescribing that online media have to provide public and transparent information about their ownership and adhere to the principles of "balance, equal access, fairness, and impartiality" if they want to report on election campaigns ([Articles 16.1 and 16.2](#)). The law defines no sanctions or enforcement authorities and offers

no guidance on how to ensure compliance of anonymous web portals and these amendments were [routinely violated](#) during the campaign for Local elections held in October. Another amendment ([Article 16.17 a](#)) prohibits political subjects from spreading false information that could undermine the integrity of the electoral process and misinform voters. The Central electoral commission has the authority to act in cases of violations.

A set of [media laws](#) was adopted in **Montenegro** (Media Law, Law on Audiovisual Media Services and Law on Public Broadcaster Radio and Television of Montenegro (RTCG)) to get Interim Benchmark Assessment Report (IBAR). The so-called IBAR laws do not directly address disinformation.

In **Serbia**, 2024 was marked by first steps in the implementation of Law on Public Information and Media and the Law on Electronic Media, adopted in 2023, that have not led to substantial improvements in media freedom or the independence of regulatory bodies. The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) has been effectively non-functional as its Council has not been appointed in time.

There was no significant progress in terms of regional alignment with the EU digital framework relevant for information integrity, specifically the DSA. Alignment with the Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act (DMA) remains the Commission's recommendation for candidate countries.

At the same time, the implementation of the DSA has not been adequate in **Croatia and Slovenia**, the only two EU member countries in the SEE Check network. Croatia did not introduce [legislation on the implementation of the Digital Services Act](#) in 2024 as expected; only the first hearing of the proposed law was discussed in the Parliament and the European Commission started an infringement procedure due to the belatedness. In Slovenia, the government submitted a [proposal](#) of a new Media Act to the National Assembly, claiming that they took into account the Digital Services Act and the European Media Freedom Act, on the last day of the year. In Slovenia, the Parliament introduced to the Penal Code [a new criminal offence of unauthorized disclosure](#) of the contents of an investigative or evidentiary action. It was dubbed "[Lex AP](#)" by journalists warning of possibilities of its abuse against whistleblowers.

Acronym List

AI – Artificial Intelligence
AIA – Artificial Intelligence Act
BCMS – Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian
BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina
CDT – Center for Democratic Transition (Montenegro)
CoP – Code of Practice on Disinformation
DANA – Depresión Aislada en Niveles Altos (Isolated Depression at High Levels – weather phenomenon)
DMA – Digital Markets Act
DSA – Digital Services Act
EFCSN – European Fact-Checking Standards Network
EU – European Union
FBiH – Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
HAARP – High-frequency Active Auroral Research Program
HDZ – Hrvatska demokratska zajednica (Croatian Democratic Union)
HPV – Human Papillomavirus
IBAR – Interim Benchmark Assessment Report
IFCN – International Fact-Checking Network
JEK 2 – Jedrska elektrarna Krško 2 (Krško Nuclear Power Plant Unit 2)
KCSS – Kosovar Centre for Security Studies
KRIK – Crime and Corruption Reporting Network
MEP – Member of the European Parliament
MMR – Measles, Mumps and Rubella vaccine
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDI – National Democratic Institute
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
NSI – New Social Initiative
OHR – Office of the High Representative
REM – Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (Regulatorno telo za elektronske medije)
RS – Republika Srpska
RT – Russia Today
RTCG – Radio and Television of Montenegro (Radio i Televizija Crne Gore)
SDS – Slovenian Democratic Party (Slovenska demokratska stranka)
SEE – Southeast Europe
SNS – Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska napredna stranka)
UN – United Nations
WEF – World Economic Forum
WHO – World Health Organization

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