

State of disinformation:
SEE region in 2025



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Contents

Introduction	4
• Information environment in 2025	4
Disinformation topics and narratives	5
• Regionally and country specific narratives	6
• Antiscience disinformation	7
Actors contributing to the spread of disinformation	7
Tactics and techniques used to spread disinformation	9
• Backlash against fact-checking	9
Events instigating the spread of disinformation	10
Antidisinformation update	11
• Fact-checking in the region	11
• Regional initiatives and collaborations	12
• Knowledge sharing: Relevant research and events	12
Legislation overview	14
List of acronyms	16
Bibliography	17

Introduction

This report presents a regional overview of the disinformation landscape in Southeast Europe (SEE) during 2025, drawing on the monitoring and fact-checking work of SEE Check's member organisations: Faktoje (Albania), Raskrinkavanje.ba (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Faktograf (Croatia), Raskrinkavanje.me (Montenegro), Raskrikavanje (Serbia), and Oštro/Razkrinkavanje (Slovenia). It covers the information environment, dominant disinformation topics and narratives, key actors and tactics, events that instigated the spread of disinformation, and developments in antidisinformation efforts and media legislation across the region.

Details about each represented country's contribution are available in the individual country reports published separately by SEE Check member organisations.¹

Information environment in 2025

2025 was a turbulent year for the information environment in Southeast Europe. The region faced major political crises that sparked intense spread of disinformation – most notably the mass civic protests in Serbia and the constitutional crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, influences from the broader global context intensified, particularly after the return of Donald Trump to the US presidency, including suspension of USAID funding in the region and a vocal change of big tech companies' attitudes towards fact-checking and fighting disinformation.

Financial hardship has marked 2025 for nearly all media markets in the region. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the national broadcaster, BHRT, continued to struggle with [financial sustainability](#), with no mechanism established to collect licence fees throughout the whole country. In Slovenia, the journalism sector faced staffing challenges, with larger outlets such as Večer in Maribor laying off staff and the editorial board of public broadcaster Radio-televizija Slovenije announcing staff reductions for 2026. The shutdown of USAID support had a particularly negative effect on smaller, local, independent and investigative media outlets in the region.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, an increase of incidents against journalists was [observed](#). Verbal attacks were the most common form of pressure, but cases of obstruction of journalistic work, legal proceedings, physical assaults, and attacks on property were also documented. A [report](#) by Foundation Mediacentar Sarajevo also draws attention to the declining public trust in media, while Reporters without Borders dropped BiH on the [World Press Freedom Index](#) for the fourth year in a row, from 81st to 86th place.

Since libel was re-criminalized in Republika Srpska in 2023, more than [200 criminal charges](#) were filed against citizens, activists and opposition figures, including 38 lawsuits against journalists. According to [Capital](#), by June 2025 only one indictment had been filed in Banja Luka, with another later reported in Trebinje. Journalist Sanja Vasković (Spin info) was among the first to face a criminal defamation charge, though no indictment followed; while Milanka Kovačević (Direkt) currently "holds the record" with six criminal defamation charges. 2025 also saw the forcible dismissal of the President of Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik by the High Representative of BiH Christian Schmidt and the [subsequent divisive elections for his replacement](#) – a development that dominated the country's political and information environment throughout the year.

In Serbia, 2025 was one of the most difficult years for press freedom in recent memory. According to the [Media Freedom Rapid Response \(MFRR\)](#) platform's annual monitoring report, 208 violations of media freedoms were documented throughout the year – more than double the 84 cases recorded in 2024. Physical attacks rose alarmingly, from 14 in 2024 to 44 in 2025, with law enforcement shifting from inaction to excessive use of force against journalists covering protests. Of 16 attacks attributed to police, over 90% occurred at protest sites, and in five cases journalists sustained injuries.

¹ See: [Disinformation Report: Albania in 2025 - SEE Check](#)
[Disinformation Report: Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2025 - SEE Check](#)
[Disinformation Report: Montenegro in 2025 - SEE Check](#)

The context for much of this violence was the mass anti-corruption protests that erupted following the deadly collapse of a canopy at the Novi Sad railway station in November 2024. Senior officials, including President Aleksandar Vučić, continued to discredit individual journalists, falsely labeling them as ‘enemies’ of the state. Independent broadcaster N1 was among the hardest hit, with at least 52 documented incidents ranging from bomb threats and death threats to physical intimidation. Devices belonging to two BIRN journalists were found to be infected with Pegasus spyware.

The year also brought a major escalation in the government’s efforts to neutralize the remaining independent media outlets ahead of elections. Investigative outlet KRIK and the OCCRP network [obtained an audio recording](#) of a conversation between Telekom Srbija director Vladimir Lučić and Stan Miller, the CEO of United Group – the parent company of media outlets like N1, Nova S, Danas, and Radar. In the conversation, Lučić conveyed that President Vučić personally requested the removal of Aleksandra Subotić, longtime head of United Media. The episode fits a well-documented pattern of Telekom Srbija being used as a financial instrument to expand pro-government media while weakening independent outlets – a strategy that is accelerating as elections approach.

RTS, the public broadcaster, became a particular flashpoint: its near-total blackout of protest coverage for weeks on end sparked a series of dedicated demonstrations outside its Belgrade headquarters, where citizens gathered to demand that the national public service actually cover events of national significance. The protests in front of RTS were themselves an indicator of how profoundly the outlet had lost public trust.

The [2025 Montenegro Report](#) of the European Commission acknowledged some progress in implementing reforms related to freedom of expression, while noting that sustained commitment is still required. The country’s zero-tolerance policy on violence against journalists was highlighted as a positive development.

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 shape the framing of events or worldviews. The section covers topics and narratives observed by the members of SEE Check network in 2025.

Global conspiracy theories continued to circulate widely across the region in 2025. These included the already familiar ‘world government’ narratives, depopulation claims, anti-Semitic theories about global elites and similar ([1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6](#)). In some countries, narratives about “alternative histories” and hidden civilizations with advanced technologies that are kept secret from the present day humanity gained more intense traction in 2025 (see examples from BiH in: [1, 2, 3, 4](#)).

Narratives rooted in global-scale conspiracy theories about restriction of property rights or freedom of expression, also continued in 2025, including those specifically targeting the European Union as the “authoritarian” entity set on limiting freedoms and rights of its citizens ([1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7](#)). EU regulations related to cash payments, and the “Chat Control” act to prevent and combat child sexual abuse – specifically, interception and monitoring of confidential conversations and communications – was targeted with similar narratives in Slovenia ([1, 2, 3](#))

In Albania the anti-EU and anti-NATO narratives promoted by US government officials were amplified and presented without critical analysis in the national media ([1, 2, 3](#)). Faktaje published more than 70 investigations on foreign malign disinformation on topics such as the war in Ukraine and attempts to undermine Ukraine’s sovereignty ([1, 2, 3, 4](#)), fearmongering about a war between Serbia and Kosovo ([1, 2, 3, 4](#)) or even a third world war between Russia and NATO, as well as broader anti-NATO and anti-EU narratives ([1, 2, 3, 4](#)). Albanian media outlets also frequently republished statements from Russian officials and pro-Kremlin political figures, without verification or contextual analysis, portraying Western governments as responsible for escalating conflicts, particularly in Ukraine and Eastern Europe ([1, 2, 3, 4](#)). In a similar context, the claims of imminent direct military conflict between NATO or EU and Russia continued to circulate, usually drawn from misrepresented statements of Western political actors ([1, 2, 3, 4](#)), or misleading coverage of civil defense preparations by NATO members, such as Lithuania’s contingency planning ([1, 2, 3](#)).

Similar false narratives about Ukraine have been observed in Montenegro as well, particularly targeting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (1, 2, 3, 4). Claims about [Western troops](#) present in Ukraine and alleged conflicts with Poland and other allied countries also re-emerged.

In Montenegro, anti-EU narratives intensified due to disputes with [Croatia](#), with some media, social media and political actors from both Montenegro and the region, portraying Croats as [Ustashas](#) and [enemies](#) of Montenegrins and Serbs; EU negotiations as humiliating for Montenegro, and the EU of tolerating Ustasha ideology in Croatia (1, 2).

Anti-Western narratives remained a stable and influential component of the [disinformation ecosystem](#) in Serbia, where political tensions in the country were frequently framed as the result of Western interference or coordinated external pressure, while reinforcing the image of the government as a defender of national sovereignty. This framing was complemented by the [consistent positive portrayal](#) of China as a strategic and benevolent partner, creating a binary worldview in which geopolitical alignment is simplified into a contrast between a hostile West and supportive non-Western actors.

In Croatia and Slovenia anti-Western narratives remain rare and limited to fringe groups, usually relating to anti-NATO sentiment and disinformation regarding the war in Ukraine (1, 2), or the “woke conspiracy” narratives closely linked to the Anti-western metanarrative.

Disinformation narratives coming from the “anti-gender” movement, targeting primarily the LGBT+ community, continued to circulate in all the countries in the region (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). In Croatia, there was a spike of disinformation regarding the health of transgender persons, especially [transgender minors and youth](#), with medical care providers for transgender individuals targeted by right-wing actors – regardless of the fact that gender reassignment for minors is prohibited in Croatia. Disinformation narratives about [sexual health education](#) as “sexualization” of children also spiked due to the City of Zagreb’s announcement of creating a dedicated program for their schools.

Fact-checkers across the region continue to observe anti-migration disinformation narratives, some reporting an increase in their prevalence and reach (1, 2, 3). In Montenegro, anti-immigrant narratives targeted Turkish nationals living in the country, ranging from exaggeration of their numbers, to false accusations of violent crimes or misdemeanors (1, 2, 3, 4). The situation escalated further when a supposed Turkish citizen – who were actually citizens of Azerbaijan – stabbed a Montenegrin man, triggering what amounted to a “[witch hunt against Turkish](#)” nationals and false claims that the Government had banned entry to people from Turkey. In Croatia, xenophobic conspiracy theories like “Great Replacement” moved into the mainstream political sphere (1, 2, 3, 4). Foreign workers and migrants were increasingly targeted with [violent attacks](#) while false accusations against them ranged from shocking or bizarre behavior like eating rats or cats or claims of bringing infectious diseases (1, 2, 3) to false accusations of serious offenses and crimes (1, 2, 3) including those allegedly committed in other countries (1, 2, 3). [False news](#) that a migrant had brutally attacked a nun in Zagreb had even [reached a global audience](#) through British anti-migrant activist Tommy Robinson. In Slovenia, disinformation about asylum seekers and migrants of the Islamic faith was frequent, including false and misleading claims about the “benefits” they allegedly receive, and the actual number of asylum seekers in the country. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Regionally and country specific narratives

In Serbia, the mass civic protests following the 2024 deadly collapse of the railway station canopy in Novi Sad became the central domestic political event of 2025 – and a major disinformation topic across the region. Domestically, the main focus of the disinformation campaign was to delegitimize the protests by framing them as orchestrated by foreign actors seeking to destabilize the country. [Conspiracy theories](#) and false claims were extensively peddled in pro-government tabloids, targeting protest participants, but also journalists, prosecutors, lawyers and any actors that took a public stand on the matter or expressed support for the protests and requests for accountability. Narratives about protest being “a colored revolution”, i.e. foreign-funded destabilization efforts, sabotage, terrorism, extremism etc, shifted attention away from institutional responsibility

and systemic failures. These narratives particularly emphasized alleged [Western interference or coordinated external pressure, positioning Western actors as destabilizing forces and the government as a defender of national sovereignty](#). Raskrikavanje fact-checked numerous such claims (1, 2), while FakeNews Tragač established systematic tracking of falsehoods targeting the students' blockades and protests in the "[Blockade Notebook](#)". The same delegitimization campaign reverberated in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Raskrinkavanje.ba addressed claims portraying the protests as externally engineered (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6).

Narratives centering on fearmongering about imminent armed conflict in the region, based on false or misleading claims, continue to circulate. In Albania, they focus on the war between Serbia and Kosovo (1, 2, 3, 4). Ethnonationalist narratives and historical revisionism, mostly tied to the wars of the 1990s, remained among the most pervasive forms of disinformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, reinforcing divisions and exacerbating regional tensions (1, 2, 3, 4). In Croatia, a [Marko Perković Thompson concert](#) in Zagreb in July, along with attacks on cultural events organized by Serb national minorities served as a catalyst for ethnonationalist disinformation (1, 2, 3). At the end of the year, a joint TikTok analysis by Fake News Tragač and Faktograf found that hatred in both Croatia and Serbia was instrumentalized for domestic political purposes, with TikTok users recycling old propaganda and linking it to new circumstances (1, 2).

Antiscience disinformation

Anti-vaccination narratives remained among the most persistent anti-science disinformation across the region, targeting a broad spectrum of immunization programs, from long-debunked falsehoods about Covid-19 vaccines, or MMR vaccine causing autism, to seasonal vaccines and misinterpretations of new scientific studies or emerging medical developments (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8).

Other previously observed health-related misinformation also persists across the region, with some countries observing an intensified spread of dangerous anti-medicine narratives that portray cancer prevention and treatment procedures such as mammographies, biopsies and chemotherapy as dangerous, while promoting unverified "natural remedies" as life-saving (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6).

Climate change denial continues to rise across the region, with denialist narratives built on selectively presented, misinterpreted or manipulated data framed as scientific evidence (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6), sometimes amplified by statements by prominent political figures such as [Donald Trump](#). Raskrinkavanje.me published a regional analysis "[Fake Climate Stories Without Borders](#)" with contributions from other SEE Check members, showing how the same narratives denying climate change were widely circulated in the region.

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.

Political actors, along with highly partisan pundits, media and other types of organizations, continue to be among the most influential producers and amplifiers of disinformation in the region.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, public figures such as Branko Petrić, a former president of the Central Election Commission and Aleksandar Radeta, former member of the Republic Election Commission of Republika Srpska and former head of the Banja Luka City Election Commission, spread skepticism about [electoral technologies](#), or promoted debunked narratives about "[stolen elections](#)" in the US to undermine trust in electronic voting systems. Jasmin Mulahusić, a social media influencer and SDA party supporter, [published fabricated screenshots](#) of AI-generated 'evidence' about polling data, and [spread a video from Nepal](#) falsely presented as a breakthrough of the blockade in Gaza. Dževad Galijašević, frequently introduced in regional media as a 'security expert', [accused USAID](#) of funding terrorism.

In Montenegro, politicians Nebojša Medojević and Milan Knežević contributed to anti-Turkish disinformation by spreading false claims about the number of Turkish nationals in the country and fabricating a statement attributed to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. IN4S, Borba and Alo (both Serbian and Montenegrin outlet) are leading the list of [content rated as manipulative](#) which focus heavily on domestic and regional political disinformation. These three have, jointly, produced over 20 percent of total manipulative content rated by Raskrinkavanje.

In Serbia, President Aleksandar Vučić was the most prominent individual source of disinformation about the protests, repeating various false claims about them being organized and financed from abroad and that student demands masked a foreign-backed attempt at regime change. Other senior ruling party figures, including ministers and MPs, amplified these narratives across media appearances and social media. Foreign political actors, most notably figures from Russia's state media ecosystem, provided additional rhetorical support, framing the protests as a "color revolution" orchestrated by Western intelligence services. A particularly notable actor in this space was the Center for Social Stability (Centar za društvenu stabilnost – CZDS), a nominally non-governmental organization with [extensive links](#) to the ruling party and government actors. CZDS produced several documentary films and mini-series directly targeting students and critical media outlets, bearing all the hallmarks of a state-adjacent propaganda operation. Their content, distributed via YouTube and broadcast on pro-government television channels including Pink and Informer, recycled the main government narratives about the protests: that foreign elements were coordinating the unrest, that a "color revolution" was underway, and that NGOs and opposition groups were the real force behind the student movement. The Center also organized counter-protest gatherings in dozens of cities across Serbia, attended by ruling party supporters and officials.

In Croatia, politicians from parties [Most](#) and [Domovinski pokret](#) were identified as recurring sources of disinformation, particularly on migration and anti-NGO narratives. TikTok (and Instagram) profiles in Croatia spread coordinated hate speech and smear campaigns, including accounts dedicated to publishing content related to the [local elections](#) in the City of Zagreb, with controversial figures like [Vinko Kojundžić and Dominik Alpeza](#) misrepresenting themselves as journalists and using AI-generated content and "cheapfakes" to push anti-migrant and anti-LGBT+ narratives.

The 'disinformation hub' first identified in the 2019, with media outlets from Serbia and Republika Srpska, remained the largest source of political disinformation and ethnonationalist narratives in the region. As observed by fact-checkers in Serbia, the network of pro-government tabloids and television channels operating in close coordination with the ruling party (Kurir, Informer, Pink, Novosti, Republika, Alo) – largely corresponding to the aforementioned "hub" – remains the most significant and consistent source of disinformation. These sources repeatedly portrayed protesters as foreign-funded agents, criminals, and destabilizers. Of the top 50 disinformation sources in BiH in 2025, 19 are based in Serbia, including Russian state-owned media Sputnik and RT Balkan. In BiH, the RTRS was the most rated media source of disinformation by Raskrinkavanje.ba, closely followed by Srna and Serbia-based tabloids like Alo, Informer, Novosti and Kurir.

In Albania domestic [political](#) actors were also key contributors to the spread of disinformation, particularly in the context of Albania's May 2025 [parliamentary](#) elections. However, the disinformation space was dominated by the growing influence of social media accounts, particularly on Facebook, with incendiary posts and reels generating massive engagement well beyond the reach of mainstream news content. Similarly, in Bosnia and Herzegovina social media dominance in the disinformation space has also peaked, with content from six major social media platforms – Facebook, TikTok, Telegram, YouTube, X – rated 699 times in 2025. A large portion of social media disinformation was driven by a massive wave of "for-profit" scams (fake giveaways involving cars or cash prizes), alongside AI-generated content and pseudo-scientific health claims.

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.

Issues recorded in previous reports, like “copy-paste journalism”, sensationalism, click-baiting and political instrumentalization of media, remained present in 2025. A persistent technique across the region involved the publication of claims attributed to unnamed sources in order to avoid fact-checking, denial, or accountability. Republishing social media posts without verifying the authorship or accuracy of their content remains a practice that allows unverified claims to enter the mainstream news cycle.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) to generate and spread disinformation increased significantly across the region in 2025.

In Montenegro, a significant rise in AI-generated and manipulated content on social media was recorded. AI has been used for harmless disinformation on [Novak Đoković](#), but also for the ones related to [aid to Gaza](#), wars in [Ukraine](#) and Middle East, as well as those created to [undermine national stability](#) in Montenegro or showcase alleged [racism in Europe](#). There have been cases of AI abuse for scam with [videos of Montenegrin minister](#) of finance being fabricated. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a fabricated screenshot of a Chat GPT conversation was used as false ‘evidence’ about political party poll rankings. In Croatia, [AI-generated political content](#) emerged as a significant trend during the Zagreb local elections campaign and in Slovenia, AI was also used in the context of disinformation about the [conflict in Gaza](#). AI videos continue to be used in scams and fraudulent advertising, peddling unverified “medical” products by creating false endorsement videos featuring various public figures across the region.

In 2025, instances of inauthentic coordinated behavior to spread false or misleading claims were observed in Croatia, where [TikTok and Instagram profiles](#) were set up specifically to publish content related to the Zagreb local elections. These profiles created ‘organic’ posts to mimic grassroots support and interacted with each other to create a false illusion of widespread public consensus, while bypassing automated detection systems for political advertising. In Montenegro, fake social media accounts were used to organise fraudulent prize games and steal users’ personal data.

Backlash against fact-checking

Fact-checkers across the region faced increasing hostility in 2025.

In January, Meta announced that it would end its third-party fact-checking program in the United States and replace it with a Community Notes model. CEO Mark Zuckerberg presented the change as a return to “free expression,” arguing that platform moderation and fact-checking had resulted in “too many mistakes and too much censorship.” Across the Western Balkans, political actors, pro-government media, conspiracy theorists and influencers who monetize misinformation, [welcomed the decision](#) as validation of their claims that fact-checking amounted to censorship.

The announcement triggered a new wave of harassment and threats against fact-checkers throughout the region. In Serbia, President Aleksandar Vučić described Meta’s decision as “hope for normal people around the world” and labeled fact-checkers “the worst censors” and “the biggest liars in Serbia,” accusing them of acting on behalf of foreign intelligence agencies. These narratives were amplified by pro-government tabloids, which targeted fact-checkers and civil society actors through coordinated smear campaigns.

In Montenegro, following actions by US authorities related to USAID funding, civil society organizations

including fact-checkers faced intense pressure and false accusations of financial abuse. In Croatia, fringe media weaponized the correction process by [filing endless correction demands and legal threats](#) to drain fact-checkers' resources, then portraying themselves as victims of censorship to crowdfund. A journalist working for Faktograf, Melita Vrsaljko, was [physically attacked](#) while covering a cultural event in Benkovac.

Events instigating the spread of 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.

One of the most prominent disinformation topics in 2025 concerned the large-scale, student-led protests in Serbia. The demonstrations began after the collapse of a canopy at the railway station in Novi Sad in late 2024, which resulted in 16 fatalities. The tragedy triggered [widespread public outrage](#) and sustained protests demanding accountability and a transparent investigation. Following attacks on peaceful demonstrators, students across Serbia organized university blockades, effectively suspending academic activities. Near-daily protests throughout the country were targeted by a surge of disinformation in both Serbian and regional media spaces. Pro-government and pro-Russian media employed every major disinformation narrative to target the protests as orchestrated or manipulated by foreign actors seeking to destabilize Serbia ([1](#), [2](#)).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, The President of Republika Srpska (RS), Milorad Dodik, was sentenced to one year in prison and banned from holding political office for six years for failing to implement decisions issued by the Office of the High Representative (OHR). Following the verdict, Dodik initiated legislative measures widely interpreted as undermining the constitutional order of the state. Arrest warrants were subsequently issued for Dodik and the Speaker of NSRS, Nenad Stevandić and early elections for RS President were called for 23 November. These events, amounting to a constitutional crisis, triggered a significant wave of disinformation, including many previously debunked claims and narratives about the High Representative's mandate, the Dayton Peace Agreement and the constitutional setup of the country, often portraying Dodik as a "defender" or "savior" of Serbs and Christian Schmidt as an adversary acting against Serb interests ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#)).

The anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide remained a major recurring trigger of disinformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2025, it also became intertwined with the broader political crisis, repurposing claims that acknowledging the genocide amounted to labeling the Serbian people as 'genocidal'. The same framing was used to depict protesters in Serbia as hostile to national interests ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)).

In Albania, the [parliamentary elections](#) held on 11 May 2025 served as a particularly intense period for the proliferation of disinformation, including an increase in AI-generated political content and the spread of false claims about candidates and parties ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)). Similar dynamics were observed in Croatia's 2025 local elections, specifically in [Zagreb](#), generating disinformation campaigns on traffic and waste management, manipulative narratives about [CSO funding](#) as opaque and politically or ideologically motivated. [AI-generated political content](#) was designed to ridicule candidates by showing them in fictional and derogatory scenarios, while "culture wars" topics like gender and identity disinformation was used to discredit some of them, including through [manipulated videos](#). Anti-migration narratives about alleged migrant crime, "[great replacement](#)" [conspiracy theories](#), and [attacks on housing policies for persons under international protection](#) were also spread.

In Montenegro, the mass shooting in Cetinje, large summer wildfires, and xenophobic reactions following an attack on a Montenegrin man by foreign nationals were among the main generators of disinformation in 2025. The wildfires triggered disinformation claiming that NATO and the EU had refused to help Montenegro, while Serbia's assistance was glorified. Croatia's blocking of the closure of Chapter 31 in Montenegro's EU accession process triggered extensive media speculation, disinformation, and organised anti-Croatian campaigns in Montenegro.

In 2025, an executive order issued by US President Donald Trump suspended United States foreign assistance, effectively halting the operations of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), one of the major donors to public institutions and civil society across the region. This global development reverberated in the region.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was quickly instrumentalized to discredit political opponents, independent media, and civil society organizations. Central to these narratives were unsubstantiated claims that USAID funds had been misappropriated, including allegations that hundreds of millions of dollars had “disappeared” within the country ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#)). In Montenegro, civil society organizations and fact-checkers faced intense pressure and false accusations of financial misconduct linked to the same USAID narrative. Serbian police [raided](#) the offices of four civil society organizations, including CRTA, the publisher of the oldest fact-checking website in the region, Istinomer. The raid was falsely presented as part of an investigation into alleged USAID-related corruption, echoing accusations promoted by Donald Trump and senior members of his administration, including tech-mogul Elon Musk, who had been appointed to lead the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), a body tasked with reducing federal spending and regulations. The raid took place in late February, just weeks after Meta’s announcement to end its Third-Party Fact-Checking Program (TPFC) and the disinformation campaign against fact-checkers and journalists it triggered in Serbia.

The event that most markedly shaped the year’s information environment in Croatia was the Zagreb concert of nationalist singer Marko Perković Thompson known, among other things, for using the [Ustasha-era salute “Za dom spremni”](#), in his song Čavoglave. The concert was held in July 2025 and the attendance was estimated at around 500.000 people. The event intensified political and social polarization and the politically charged atmosphere persisted throughout the year, continuing with attacks on cultural events organized by the Serb national minority, local cultural events, as well as a series of protests against foreign workers in Croatia. In response to these events, a large anti-fascist march “United against fascism” was held in four Croatian cities. The march also became the target of disinformation, with [Prime Minister Plenković](#) and right-wing political actors framing it as an anti-Croatian gathering. These narratives were supported with false claims about “[Chetnik](#)” symbols at the protest, buses arriving from neighboring countries and photomontages falsely linking Zagreb’s mayor and local activists to Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić.

In Slovenia, the referendum on the Act on assistance in voluntary euthanasia was held and the proposal rejected, in November. The vote was subject of misinformation on assisted euthanasia relating it to practices during the Nazi era. This view was shared by a large number of social media users, including the Ljubljana Archbishop Stanislav Zore ([1](#)). The new [Mass Media Act](#), the first major legislative change in the media sector in the past 20 years, was also subject to false and misleading claims ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)).

The situation in the Middle East, specifically the Israel-Palestine conflict, remained a topic of disinformation in the region, some targeting Palestinian refugees ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#)).

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

SEE Check member organizations maintained active fact-checking operations throughout 2025, adapting their monitoring to the rapidly evolving disinformation landscape driven by elections, political crises, and the growing use of AI-generated content. Across the region, fact-checkers not only debunked false claims but also produced original analyses of disinformation ecosystems, actors, and tactics.

In Albania, Faktoje verified and debunked a total of 908 claims or narratives in 2025 – more than half of them (around 580) focused on disinformation circulating on Facebook. Faktoje also published over 70 investigations on foreign malign disinformation, alongside dedicated electoral monitoring projects including the “Fact-o-meter” and “Electoral Promises” trackers for the May 2025 parliamentary elections. Faktoje also produced [“The Conflict”](#), a documentary on foreign disinformation and FIMI in Albania and the Western Balkans.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Raskrinkavanje.ba has expanded its [database](#) to over 3.850 media and social media sources whose claims were fact-checked on the website at least once since 2017, produced extensive analyses of the disinformation ecosystem surrounding the constitutional crisis and the protests in Serbia and continued to strengthen its prebunking efforts, focusing on proactive responses to disinformation trends in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In Serbia, Raskrikavanje published multiple investigations, including a major [analysis of pro-Kremlin propaganda](#) in the Balkans and a study of [pro-China narratives](#) in Serbian tabloids. Faktograf published a study on [disinformation during the Croatian local elections](#).

In Montenegro, CDT conducted a public education and awareness [campaign](#) on the EU’s Digital Services Act (DSA) through articles, social media content, podcasts and public discussions. The campaign focused on explaining how the regulation affects citizens, online platforms, media, and policymakers in [Montenegro and the Western Balkans](#) and highlighted the importance of aligning Montenegro’s digital governance framework with EU standards as part of the country’s accession process. In Slovenia, Oštro conducted 10 educational workshops and professional seminars in 2025, committed to media literacy both nationally and internationally.

Regional initiatives and collaborations

In 2025, SEE Check member organizations deepened cross-border collaboration on research, media literacy, and advocacy. The cross-border [TikTok analysis](#) by Faktograf and FakeNews Tragač offered one of the most concrete analyses of how shared political propaganda circulates across national boundaries. Raskrinkavanje.me’s [regional climate disinformation analysis](#) similarly demonstrated the regional character of antisience narratives.

Throughout 2025, advocating for stronger information integrity in the Western Balkans remained one of the core priorities of CA “Zašto ne”. The organization engaged with multiple stakeholders at both national and regional levels, including the Regional Cooperation Council, national decision-makers, regulators, EU Delegations, civil society organizations and academics. In 2025, Zašto ne became an affiliate member of EDRi and joined the CSO coordination group on the European Democracy Shield, led by the European Partnership for Democracy.

In Slovenia, Oštro is part of the [KOMPAS project](#) – Strengthening and Connecting Media NGOs to Protect Democratic Public Debate – which is co-funded by the Ministry of Public Administration and aims to address the declining quality of public debate and shrinking space for democratic discussion. Faktoje also participated in a panel discussion at the global Fact-Checking Summit in Rio de Janeiro, highlighting the regional FIMI project and the role of cross-border resilience-building in the Western Balkans.

Knowledge sharing: Relevant research and events

On top of their regular fact-checking work, SEE Check members published several relevant research and analyses and participated in significant regional and international events in 2025.

Publications by SEE Check members

SEE Check members produced the following research, reports and analyses in 2025:

- [In-depth reports and manuals](#) covering climate and environment disinformation, the impact of disin-

formation on women and gender inequality, and building journalist resilience against disinformation – Faktoje

- [40 Promises, 10 Municipalities](#) monitoring initiative assessing transparency and fulfilment of electoral promises by local governments in Albania – Faktoje
- [Monitoring of political parties' compliance with media freedom, transparency and access to information standards](#) monitoring conducted during the May 2025 parliamentary elections – Faktoje
- [Research on citizens' perceptions of propaganda and false narratives](#) – CDT
- [Why Professional Fact-Checking Matters: Meta, the EU, and the Western Balkans](#) – Zašto ne
- [Integrity of Information During the Election Campaign in the Online Space](#) – Zašto ne
- [Violation of Users' Rights in the Online Environment and the Responsibility of Online Platforms: Benefits of Regulation and the Role of Non-State Actors](#) – Zašto ne
- [OPERATION 'GRINNING SQUINTING FACE': ATTACKS ON THE CLIMATE PORTAL HIDDEN BEHIND A SMILING FACE](#) – Faktograf
- [Fraud with a Familiar Face: AI-generated content in the SEE region](#) – Faktograf
- [A Typology of Digital Scams: A Framework for Detection, Classification, and Prevention](#) – Faktograf
- [EV Misinformation in Mediterranean Europe: Insights from Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Croatia, and Montenegro](#) – Faktograf
- [Činjenice iza kampanje: izvještaj o dezinformacijama tijekom lokalnih izbora 2025.](#) – Faktograf
- [Mržnja na TikToku u Hrvatskoj i Srbiji: Bajom i Thompsonom protiv blokadera i antifašista](#) – Faktograf
- [Fabricating Doubt and Persecuting Science: Analysis of Misinformation About the Climate Crisis in Croatia](#) – Faktograf

SEE Check members contributed to the following external publications and collaborative studies:

- [Preparedness of Digital Environment Regulators for the Requirements of the DSA, DMA and AIA: Analysis of the Institutional Capacities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia](#) (with contribution by Zašto ne).
- [Principles for a Human Rights-Based Application of the DSA: A Global Perspective](#) – published by the DSA Human Rights Alliance with direct participation of CA Zašto ne.

Events (conferences, seminars and similar)

In 2025, several relevant regional and international events were attended or organized by members of the SEE Check network, including the following:

- [International Fact-Checking Day public event organized by Faktoje](#) – held on April 2, 2025 in Tirana, with the annual "Fatos Baxhaku" awards and a discussion on verified information and democratic resilience.
- [Events organized by Faktoje with support of the Dutch Embassy in Albania and SciDev](#) – focused on the rise of disinformation and challenges to journalists.
- [National Conference on the Right to Information](#) – with Faktoje as participant, discussing access to information and transparency in Albania.
- [Panel discussion at the global Fact-Checking Summit in Rio de Janeiro](#) – featuring Faktoje's contribution on the regional FIMI project and cross-border resilience-building.
- [POINT 13 Conference](#) – organized by "Zašto ne" in Sarajevo on 29–30 May 2025, with panels on gender disinformation, whole-of-society approaches, and fact-checking.
- [Internet Governance Forum Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) – held in Sarajevo in November 2025, co-organized by CA "Zašto ne", including panels on disinformation and digital regulation.
- [Workshop on fact-checking at the University of Maribor](#) – organized by Oštro for students, professors and other participants on October 24, 2025.
- [Specialized workshop for the editorial team of Ovtar24.si](#) – organized by Oštro on November 19, 2025, focused on identifying disinformation and mastering fact-checking skills.

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 **Albania**, the [National Strategy Against Disinformation](#) (2025–2030) was adopted, but no implementing legislation has been passed. The strategy was drafted by a special parliamentary commission without opposition participation, in collaboration with 19 experts and several government-affiliated organizations, including Faktoje. It remains unimplemented due to the absence of a concrete action plan, dedicated budget, political consensus and the necessary legal and sub-legal acts that were not adopted during 2025.

Efforts have been made to [decriminalize](#) defamation and insult in Albania, with consultations including media representatives, experts, civil society actors and members of the two major political parties. The initiative aims to abolish criminal provisions on defamation and insult, which have had a chilling effect on journalism and public debate and to shift their treatment to civil law.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** there has not been any relevant new legislation during 2025, but some effects of previously adopted legislation changes were observed (see also "Information Environment" in this report).

During the early elections in RS, the Central Election Commission (CEC) applied for the first time the 2024 OHR-imposed Election Law changes that prohibit political actors from spreading disinformation that could undermine elections. The CEC fined [three parties](#): SDS and List for Justice and Order Nebojša Vukanović for statements about the CEC President, and SNSD for statements about CEC and its members. The decisions lack a clear definition of "disinformation", do not explain the process or evidence used to establish falsity, blur the line between disinformation and defamation, and do not engage with legal standards on conflict of interest, given that the sanctioned claims targeted CEC members or the institution itself (in an earlier meeting, CEC members told "Zašto ne" they consider themselves competent only for disinformation targeting the CEC and the electoral process, although the Election Law amendments do not prescribe such a limitation). These cases illustrate how problematic it is to legally sanction "disinformation", especially when the same body acts simultaneously as the alleged target, complainant and arbiter in the matter.

In **Montenegro**, a [Protocol on the Protection of Journalists](#) was signed in October 2025, as a first step towards establishing a Security Mechanism for Journalists in Montenegro. The protocol followed a series of attacks against journalists. Montenegro started to [nominally implement EMFA](#) in 2025, launching work to incorporate the [DSA and EMFA](#) into national law. Working groups were established to prepare amendments to media and other laws, planned for 2026, to enable full implementation of these acts.

In **Serbia**, the National Assembly of Serbia adopted amendments to three media laws. the Law on Electronic Media, the Law on Public Media Services, and the Law on Public Information and Media in [June 2025](#), with the most prominent novelty being the establishment of an Audience Ombudsman, an independent body intended to protect the rights of viewers, listeners, and readers, and for the first time formally requiring public broadcasters to respond to audience complaints. The government promoted the changes as a step towards alignment with EU standards. However, European Commission notes in its 2025 [Rule of Law Report](#) that amendments to the media laws, while formally aligned with the EU acquis and European standards, were adopted through a significantly curtailed public consultation process, noting that serious concerns persist about the independence and effectiveness of the media regulator REM, the politicization of public service media, the safety and working conditions of journalists, and recent market developments such as the removal of critical television channels from a state-linked cable operator's offer. NUNS, ANEM, and Local Press [criticized the amendments](#), particularly the rushed and non-transparent process, warning that several provisions would weaken media freedom, enable political influence over the media, and undermine democratic standards.

Separately, the draft Foreign Agents Law introduced to parliament in late 2024 by MPs from the pro-Russian Movement of Socialists was not put to a vote after President Vučić stated his party would not support it.

In Croatia, the DSA implementation law was [adopted and entered into force in April](#). Under DSA, HAKOM and the Electronic Media Agency (AEM) began the process of designating “trusted flaggers” – specialized entities whose notices of illegal content or disinformation must be prioritized by platforms like Facebook and TikTok. The Ministry of Culture proposed the [first draft](#) of EMFA implementation legislation and held public consultations.

In Slovenia, a new [Mass Media Act](#) – the first major revision of Slovenian media legislation in over twenty years – entered into force on 27 September 2025. The law does not directly define or regulate disinformation, but introduces a ‘right of correction and reply’ mechanism. Notably, the law requires the labelling of AI-generated media content and holds publishers responsible for its accuracy and legality.

List of acronyms

AEM – Agencija za elektroničke medije (Electronic Media Agency, Croatia)
AI – Artificial Intelligence
ANEM – Association of Independent Electronic Media (Serbia)
BHRT – Bosanskohercegovačka radiotelevizija (Public Broadcaster of Bosnia and Herzegovina)
BIRN – Balkan Investigative Reporting Network
BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina
CA – Civic Association
CDT – Centar za demokratsku tranziciju (Centre for Democratic Transition, Montenegro)
CEC – Central Election Commission (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
CEO – Chief Executive Officer
CRTA – Centre for Research, Transparency and Accountability (Serbia)
CSO – Civil Society Organization
CZDS – Centar za društvenu stabilnost (Centre for Social Stability, Serbia)
DFC – Digital Forensic Center (Montenegro)
DMA – Digital Markets Act (European Union)
DOGE – Department of Government Efficiency (United States)
DSA – Digital Services Act (European Union)
EDRI – European Digital Rights (network)
EMFA – European Media Freedom Act
EU – European Union
FIMI – Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference
HAKOM – Hrvatska regulatorna agencija za mrežne djelatnosti (Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Activities)
HND – Hrvatsko novinarsko društvo (Croatian Journalists' Association)
LGBT+ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and related identities
MFRR – Media Freedom Rapid Response (platform)
MMR – Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (vaccine)
MP(s) – Member(s) of Parliament
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
NSRS – Narodna skupština Republike Srpske (National Assembly of Republika Srpska)
NUNS – Nezavisno udruženje novinara Srbije (Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia)
OCCRP – Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project
OHR – Office of the High Representative (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
REM – Regulatorno telo za elektronske medije (Regulatory Body for Electronic Media, Serbia)
RS – Republika Srpska (entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina)
RSF – Reporters Sans Frontières / Reporters Without Borders
RT – Russia Today (Russian state-funded television network)
RTRS – Radio-televizija Republike Srpske (Radio-Television of Republika Srpska)
RTS – Radio-televizija Srbije (Radio-Television of Serbia)
SDA – Stranka demokratske akcije (Party of Democratic Action, BiH)
SDS – Srpska demokratska stranka (Serb Democratic Party, BiH)
SEE – Southeast Europe
SNSD – Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata (Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, BiH)
TPFC – Third-Party Fact-Checking (Meta programme)
US – United States
USAID – United States Agency for International Development

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