BEHIND THE SCREENS

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE STATE OF INFORMATION DISORDER

July 2023

HIBRID.INFO

Behind the Screens:
Annual report on the state of information disorder

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This report monitors and researches the status of misinformation during the period January-June 2023, based on data provided by the fact-checking platform "hibrid.info". The format of this report is monitoring and analytical and describes the first six months of 2023 (January-June 2023). This is the second report published by "hibrid.info", while the first report was published in January of 2023 covering the period July-December 2022.

This report was conceived by "hibrid.info", a part of the Kosovo NGO "Action for Democratic Society" (ADS), and is supported by the American foundation "National Endowment for Democracy" (NED) as part of the project "Promoting Objective Journalism and Combatting Disinformation".

The purpose of this report is to analyze information disorder in Kosovo and the media environment in the country. In order to analyze and review the challenges of information disorder in Kosovo, the report consists of three main parts:

- The first part examines the media context of the information disorder and the political and socio-economic context of the media environment.

- The second part extensively analyzes the findings from the six-month monitoring of misinformation in Kosovo and compares the data with the previous period (July-December 2022).

- In the third part, issues of media regulation and self-regulation, as well as legal and institutional deficiencies related to media regulation and self-regulation in Kosovo are discussed.

During this six-month monitoring, it was observed that political topics have dominated, being the most discussed area by various publishers and media in Albanian (60%) and Serbian (37%), who

INTRODUCTION

have created and disseminated disinformation about political developments in Kosovo. The dynamics of events in northern Kosovo have dominated the articles of publishers in Albanian (58%) and Serbian (39%) as part of the disinformative narratives on political issues. The north of Kosovo is clearly used by the media in Serbian (in addition to those in Albanian) regarding content with disinformation about Kosovo. Social issues are the second most discussed topic mainly by publishers in Albanian language.

It is observed that publishers in the Albanian language tend to create more content deemed as "clickbait," "fake news," "scam," and "professional mistake"[1] in which social content, black chronicles, and politics are addressed. Meanwhile, articles about political and security developments in Kosovo, which consist of "disinformation", "conspiracy theories", "manipulation of facts" and "unverified content", have been mainly published by Serbian-language media. Albanian language publishers have produced misinformative articles in the political area, however, their focus has been more on articles covering social issues and black chronicles.

These weaknesses directly or indirectly affect the prevention and combating of information disorder in Kosovo, making it even more difficult.

[1] The definition and meaning of these categories of misinformation are explained in the glossary.

I. THE INFORMATION DISORDER CONCEPT

In the professional and academic literature, the notion of "information disorder", for misinformation, disinformation and fake news, was first mentioned and defined as a concept by authors Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan in a report published by the Council of Europe in 2017. According to them, information disorder itself manifests through three main forms: misinformation, disinformation and mal-information (with intent to cause harm),[2] as summarized below.:

Misinformation is when false information is shared, but no harm is meant.

Disinformation •is when false information knowingly shared to cause harm.

Mal-information •is when genuine informationn is shared to cause harm, often by moving information designed to stay private into the public sphere.

This phenomenon was placed at the center of attention, with special emphasis after the referendum campaign in the United Kingdom to leave the European Union (otherwise known as Brexit) in June 2016 and the presidential election campaign in the United States in 2016, with theoretical, professional, and academic research being conducted on it. In these two major European and global events, a large amount of fake news and disinformation was widely disseminated by various actors for manipulation purposes, including external influences often referred to as Russian [3] interference to intervene or influence major events at the time.

[2] Wardle, C., & Derakhshan, H. (2017). Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policymaking, f. 5. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
[3] Conrad, M., & Hálfdanarson, G. (2023). Introduction: Europe in the Age of Post-Truth Politics. In M. Conrad, G. Hálfdanarson, A. Michailidou, C. Galpin, & N. Pyrhönen (Eds.), Europe in the Age of Post-Truth Politics: Populism, Disinformation and the Public Sphere (f. 1-9). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13694-8_1

Since then until now, information disorder, expressed in different forms, is no longer considered a challenge of only one country, but it has become part of politics around the world and, according to serious authors dealing with the theoretical and academic treatment of this phenomenon, unfortunately it seems to have been normalized in political vocabulary and communication.[4]

In addition, fake news and other forms of misinformation, in the context of information disorder, are seen as a major factor in the decline of democracy on the one hand and the rise of authoritarianism, populism, racism and polarization of society on the other.[5]

This combined theoretical, academic and professional approach to the trends of information disorder is important to understand the trends of this phenomenon in the Western Balkans region in general, as well as in Kosovo in particular, which is also the main purpose of this monitoring and research report on the state of misinformation in Kosovo during the six-month period January-June 2023.

Fake news and other forms of misinformation, in the context of information disorder, are seen as a major factor in the decline of democracy on the one hand and the rise of authoritarianism, populism, racism and polarization of society on the other.

[4] Egelhofer, J. L., Aaldering, L., Eberl, J.-M., Galyga, S., & Lecheler, S. (2020). From Novelty to Normalization? How Journalists Use the Term "Fake News" in their Reporting. Journalism Studies, 21:10, 1323-1343. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2020.1745667
[5] Monsees, L. (2021). Information disorder, fake news and the future of democracy. Globalizations, 20:1, 153-168. 2]

II. THE MEDIA CONTEXT OF THE INFORMATION DISORDER IN KOSOVO

In Kosovo, information disorder is mainly disseminated by online media (portals) that intentionally or unintentionally create and disseminate misinformative content. In a certain political context and in order to reach such media contents to readers and wider audiences as much as possible, online media are unrestricted in disseminating any information, and that with an unprecedented speed never seen before.
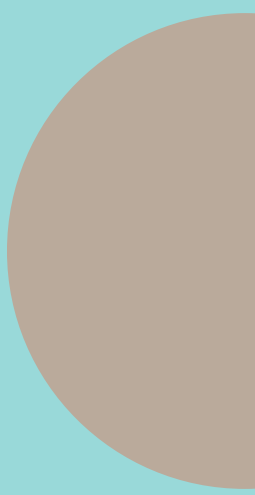
Social media use, possibilities for disseminating information and massive usage by media, publishers and different users have enabled misinformative content, in addition to accurate news and confirmed data, to quickly reach readers and social media users. The establishment of multiple online media in Kosovo for the production and dissemination of various news, including those with misinformative content, has been encouraged.

The data gathered by "hibrid.info" show that online media, in addition to having an online presence through websites, have an active presence on social media. In Kosovo, Facebook has the greatest social media influence, widely disseminating posts from other online media and operators that publish misinformative content, while TikTok is also used by the media to disseminate misinformation, but Twitter significantly less.

Today's technology allows for the fast and easy publication and dissemination of information, but also users and the general public are subject to informational disorder. This makes it difficult to monitor, control and potentially sanction media and online pages that disseminate misinformation. This is one the main challenges identified in international organizations' reports, which criticize the lack of regulation in current legislation that do not regulate online media activity. The continuous remarks of the European Commission (EC) for changes in legislation concerning the regulation of online media and its harmonization with the relevant

European Union (EU) Directive on audiovisual media [6] have been only partially taken into account by the institutions of Kosovo. There is a very little progress in this regard as the draft law for its regulation is still under drafting and has not been approved yet [7]. The challenge itself seems to be also the capacities of the current regulatory (Independent Media Commission) and self-regulatory mechanisms of media in Kosovo (Press Council of Kosovo), which are faced with insufficient financial and professional resources [8].

According to statistics, since 2020 in Kosovo newspapers are no longer printed and the Kosovar public is mainly informed by online media, taking into account the level of internet penetration in Kosovo and by television, as a traditional form of information. Surveys by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics in October 2022 show almost absolute internet penetration in Kosovo of 97.9%. [9]

98%

internet penetration in Kosovo

[6] European Commission. (2022). Kosovo 2022 Report, fq. 33-34. Brussels: European Commission.
[7] Focus group with media experts organized by "hibrid.info". Pristina, May 22, 2023.
[8] Media regulatory and self-regulatory mechanisms are addressed in a separate section in this report.
[9] Kosovo Agency of Statistics. (2022). Results of the Information Technology Use Survey and Communication 2022, p. 9. Pristina: Kosovo Agency of Statistics.

III. THE POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF THE INFORMATION DISORDER IN KOSOVO

During this six-month period of misinformation in Kosovo, there have been various movements in terms of misinformative content that were the target of information disorder both inside and outside the country. In this six-month period, misinformative content has been dominated by publications on political and social issues, depending on developments during this period. Similarly, to the previous six-month period (July-December 2022) [10], in this period, publications in the political area have predominated with 25%, followed by content in the social area with 21%, where the difference between them is 4%.

The involvement of social media in the monitoring of misinformative contents during this period has influenced a high percentage of articles in the social area, in addition to political areas. Both real media and suspicious portals in Albanian language have also published more misinformative articles with social topics followed by political topics. The reason for dominating political topics in general lies in the fact that a considerable amount of misinformative articles by the Serbian language media are in the political area and consequently this has established the political area as predominant over other areas. In June 2023, this was related particularly to the tensions that had arisen in northern Kosovo, where both Albanian-language publishers and Serbian-language media had created and disseminated unfounded claims as part of disinformation narratives concerning political and security matters for the northern part.

The difference between misinformation published in the social and black chronicle areas and those in the political and security areas is that, for the latter, not only Albanian-language media have published them, but also Serbian ones. During the period of January-June 2023, all misinformative content about Kosovo was created and disseminated in the political and security areas by the Serbian language media while completely different access to content in the Albanian language and their publications are varied, ranging from social aspects, black chronicles, politics, security,

[10] Bokshi, A. (2023). The information disorder in the second period of 2022, p. 17. Pristina: ADS / hibrid.info.

advertising, sports, showbiz, etc. The most predominant category of misinformation during this period has been "Clickbait", followed by the category "Disinformation" [11].

In the political area, misinformative content has focused on the relations between Kosovo and Serbia, events in northern Kosovo, the Serb community, unfounded claims by Serbian media that the Serb community in Kosovo is under threat from Kosovo institutions, that plans are being prepared for the deportation of Serbs from northern Kosovo, etc.

Publishments with distorting themes of a social nature have been dealing with various issues, such as false claims from publishers in Albanian language for gifting wealth, love relationships, prices increase, financial assistance, the Big Brother VIP Albania television program (BBVA) etc.

In the political area, misinformative content has focused on the relations between Kosovo and Serbia, events in northern Kosovo, the Serb community, unfounded claims by Serbian media that the Serb community in Kosovo is under threat from Kosovo institutions, that plans are being prepared for the deportation of Serbs from northern Kosovo, etc.

[11] See the relevant section where these two main categories of misinformation are analyzed in the report.

IV.ANALYSIS OF THE MISINFORMATION SITUATION IN KOSOVO

Information disorder is the common term for various types and forms of misinformation. With the aim of covering all the ways and forms in which it manifests itself, "hybrid.info" has divided misinformation into several assessment categories, based on the methodology adopted by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), as follows [12]:

Classification helps to systematize misinformation in an inclusive way and to understand at its core how it is spread and branched out, helping us to learn more about it.:

Clickbait

Disinformation

Professional mistake

Fake news

Manipulation of facts

Scam

Unverified content

Conspiracy theory

Context

Purposes

Actors and institutions involved in misinformation

[12] Here are only those evaluation categories that appear in monthly reports. To view all categories, see the "hibrid.info" methodology here: https://hibrid.info/metodologjia/

For the six-month period January-June 2023, "hibrid.info" has published six monthly monitoring reports [13] on the state of misinformation in Kosovo. The aim is to have a more objective explanation of the state of information and an explanation of the trends of misinformation during the monitoring period. The platform "hibrid.info" compares data on information disorder in every monthly report gathered from the database through eight comparative categories which are analyzed in the report.

1
Evaluation categories of misinformation

2
Topics

3
Areas

4
Misinformation publishers

5
Albanian and Serbian language publishers

6
Types of social media

7
Social media publishers

8
Most discussed Institutions and personalities

[13] The monthly reports published by "hibrid.info" can be found here: https://hibrid.info/raportet-mujore-monitoruese/.

1. EVALUATIVE CATEGORIES OF MISINFORMATIVE ARTICLES

This section analyzes articles with misinformative content based on the evaluative categories of misinformation, thereby making it easier to understand misinformation trends as part of information disorder. The "hibrid.info" methodology outlines the criteria for assessing misinformative publications and how a given misinformation article can be evaluated [14].

During the period of January-June 2023, it was observed that articles rated in the "Clickbait"[15] category had the highest domination at 25% compared to other categories. Generally, monitored media and operators have published the most articles in this category and in second place is the "Disinformation"[16] category with 21%.

Monitoring during this period shows that these two categories have dominated almost continuously even in monthly reports, with the exception of April 2023, when there was much less content identified as disinformation [17] and ranked fourth. In June 2023, clickbait category experienced a drastic decline in the fourth place, as a result of the overwhelming domination of security political topics due to the events in northern Kosovo municipalities. Monitoring findings show that in June 2023 neither of these two categories was in first place, because fake news was in first place (24%), disinformation in second (19%), followed by unverified content (15%) and clickbait in fourth (11%).

Misinformative content that has received other ratings in this six-month period include the category "Fake News" (13%), "Scam" (12%), "Unverified Content" (10%) and other categories.

[14] The methodology of "hibrid.info" for fact-checking and combating disinformation and fake news is found here: https://hibrid.info/metodologjia/ .
[15] The definition and meaning of the "Clickbait" category is explained in the glossary.
[16] The definition and meaning of the " Disinformation" category is explained in the glossary.
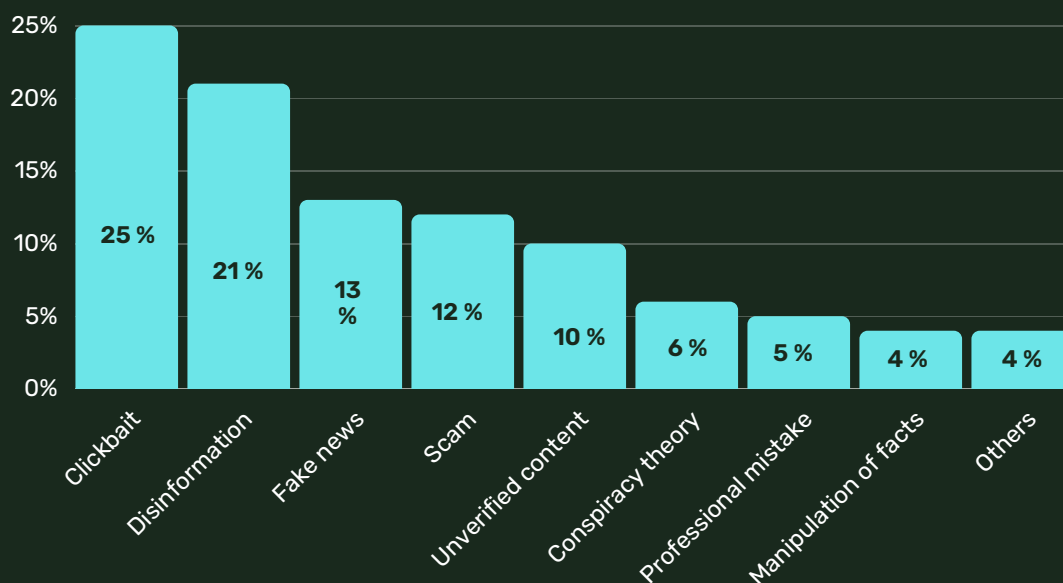[17] See the monitoring report for April 2023 published by ADS/hibrid.info here: https://hibrid.info/raporti-monitorues-i-keqinformimit-per-muajin-prill-2023/.

Fig 1. Misinformative publications by rating categories during the six-month period (January-June 2023)

Comparison between two six-month periods (July-December 2022 and January-June 2023):

Considering that this is the second monitoring report [18] on misinformation in Kosovo and for the purpose of comparing data between the two six-month periods, the report compares the monitoring data on misinformation. In the previous six-month period, the main categories were clickbait and disinformation, but it is clear that misinformation rated as disinformation with 28% had predominated in first place compared to clickbait publications with 25% (3% more than clickbait). This has been reversed in the first half of this year (January-June 2023), when disinformation was always almost second only to the clickbait category.
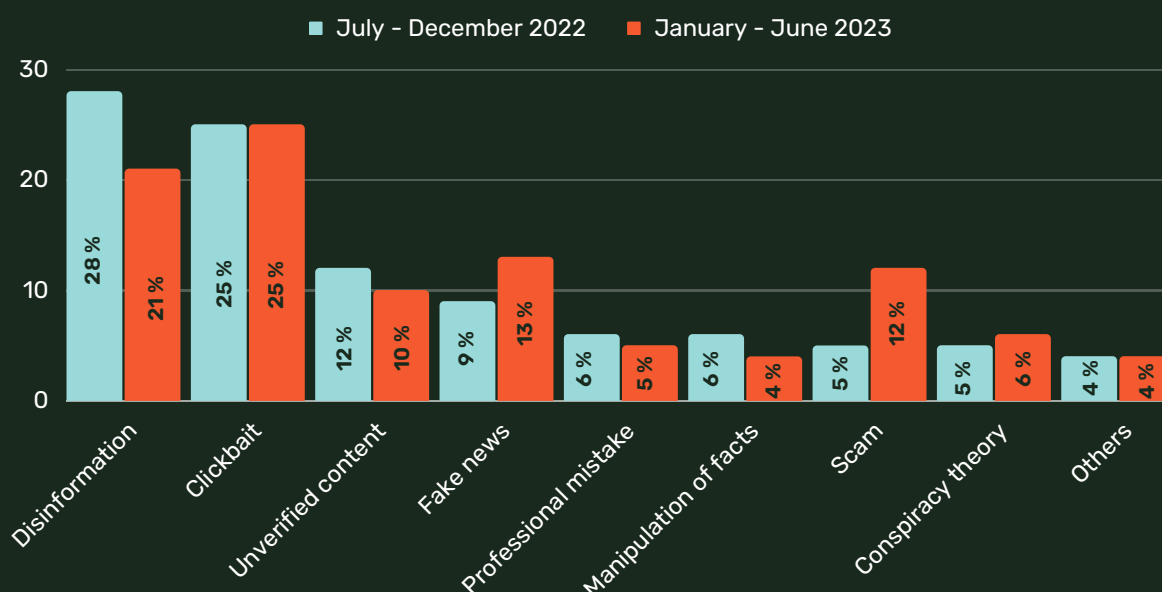

Fig 2. Misinformative publications according to evaluation categories in the two six-month periods

[18] See the first report "Information disorder in the second period of 2022". ADS/hibrid.info, January 2023.

Analysis of the "Disinformation" and "Clickbait" categories

Data analysis on a monthly basis show that disinformation had continued to dominate even during January 2023, as a continuation of the trend of December 2022, but from February to the end of this six-month period (June 2023), it had taken second place.

The reason for the decrease in misinformative publications in this category in the following months lies in the fact that disinformation is mainly disseminated about political and security issues in the context of Kosovo's relations with Serbia, through which single-source narratives are built, without confirmation and supplementation with other data sources, contain half-truths or have titles that do not reflect the accuracy of the information [19] in terms of the content of the text.

Misinformative contents are disseminated and published in other areas outside the political and security area (such as social issues, black chronicles, weather, sports, etc.), but usually at a lower percentage compared to politics and security, because data from monitoring shows that these two areas together constitute 54% or more than half of the disinformation disseminated during this six-month period.

As the number of misinformative reports on these two topics (politics and security) decreases, so does the number of publications in the disinformation category on one hand, clickbait publications and other categories increases, on the other hand, as confirmed in the following months from February to June 2023. During April 2023, there was considerably less disinformation compared to other months of this six-month period, as a result of the lack of misinformation concerning politics and security (this is also confirmed by Figure 5), placing this category in fourth place with 12% overall, after clickbait, fake news, and unverified content [20]. In the following months (May and June 2023), an increase of disinformation is observed as a result of the more frequent dissemination of misinformative articles about politics and security in the context of the ongoing events in Northern Kosovo.

A significant portion of disinformation during this six-month period, and even before, has been created and disseminated by the media in the Serbian language. These latter have created a misinforming narrative regarding the Serbian community in Kosovo, northern Kosovo, false claims of threat to Serbs from Kosovar state

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[19] See "hibrid.info's" fact-checking methodology.
[20] See the monitoring report for April 2023 published by ADS/hibrid.info here: https://hibrid.info/raporti-monitorues-i-keqinformimit-per-muajin-prill-2023/.

institutions, strained political relations between Kosovo and Serbia, etc.

During the six-month period, the majority of misinformative content in the category of disinformation was published by publishers in Albanian language (suspicious portals at 37%, social media at 31%, and real media at

5%). 73% have been published by publishers in Albanian language and 27% by real media in Serbian language (in Serbian language, only real media are measured, but not social media and suspicious portals, thus the percentage of disinformation is lower in these media).
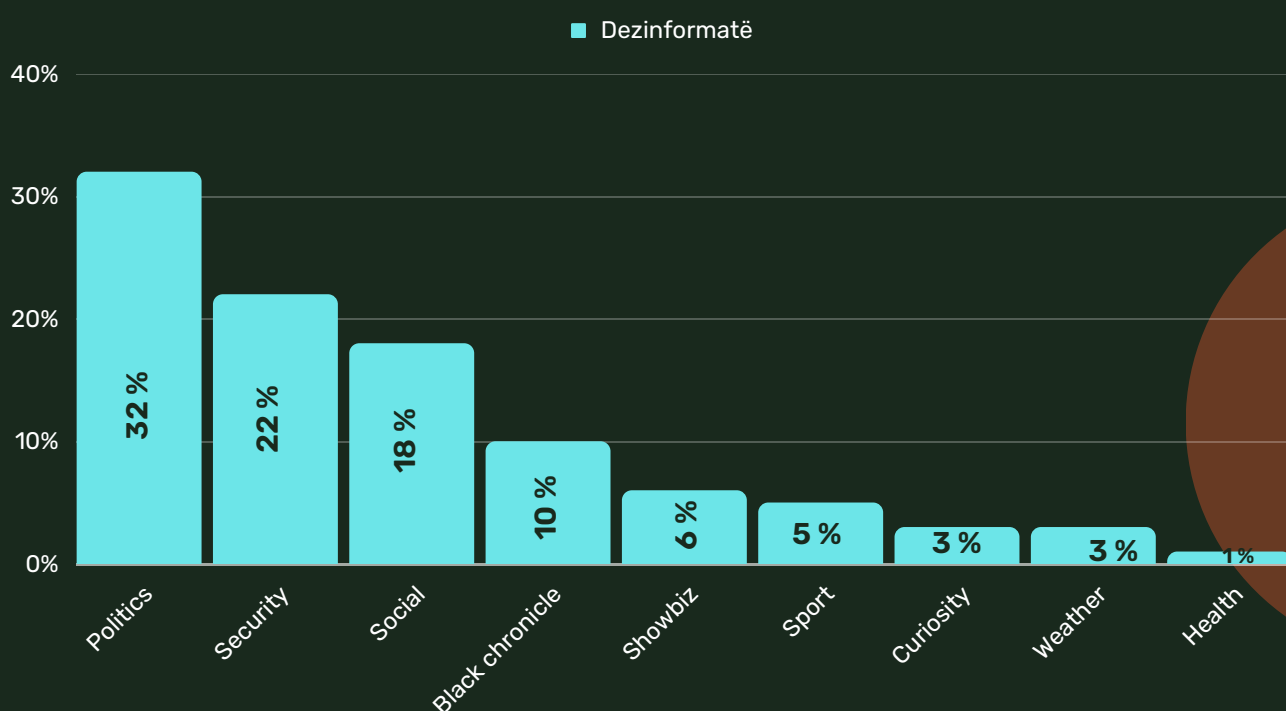

Fig 3. Areas in which there was the most misinformation in the "Disinformation" category during the six-month period (January-June 2023)

[21] Đurđević, M. (17 gusht 2021). Mediji u Srbiji oznaku 'saradnici Vlade' vide kao Tviter 'žigosanje'. Radio Slobodna Evropa.

Clickbait misinformation has dominated throughout this six-month period, with the exception of January and June 2023 (see Figure 5) [22]. In this evaluative category, it is observed that mostly misinformation is created and disseminated about the black chronicle and social issues that attract readers' and wider public interest, such as false reports of murders, accidents, arrests, injuries, suicides, the TV program "BBVA", the withdrawal of material funds from the pension savings Trust, prices increase, different financial aid, etc. Clickbait evaluations have also taken other thematic areas; however, black chronicles and social issues dominate over other areas (such as politics, security, weather, sports, etc.). According to the data from Figure 5, the most commonly created and disseminated topics by various media are for black chronicle and social issues, both of which account for 69% in total.

All publications in this category have been disseminated by the media in the Albanian language and monitoring of misinformative articles in the clickbait category has brought to the surface. It is observed that media in Albanian language that publish misinformative articles in this category need to gain more audience in the online format.

The biggest percentage of viewers of this news are the real media in Albanian language with 68%, followed by various social media pages and profiles with 20% and suspicious portals or operators with 12%. It can be said that media that publish such misinformative articles do not necessarily have the tendency or intention to misinform, but do so mainly to increase their audience on social media and the potential for financial gains through clicks.

■ Clickbait

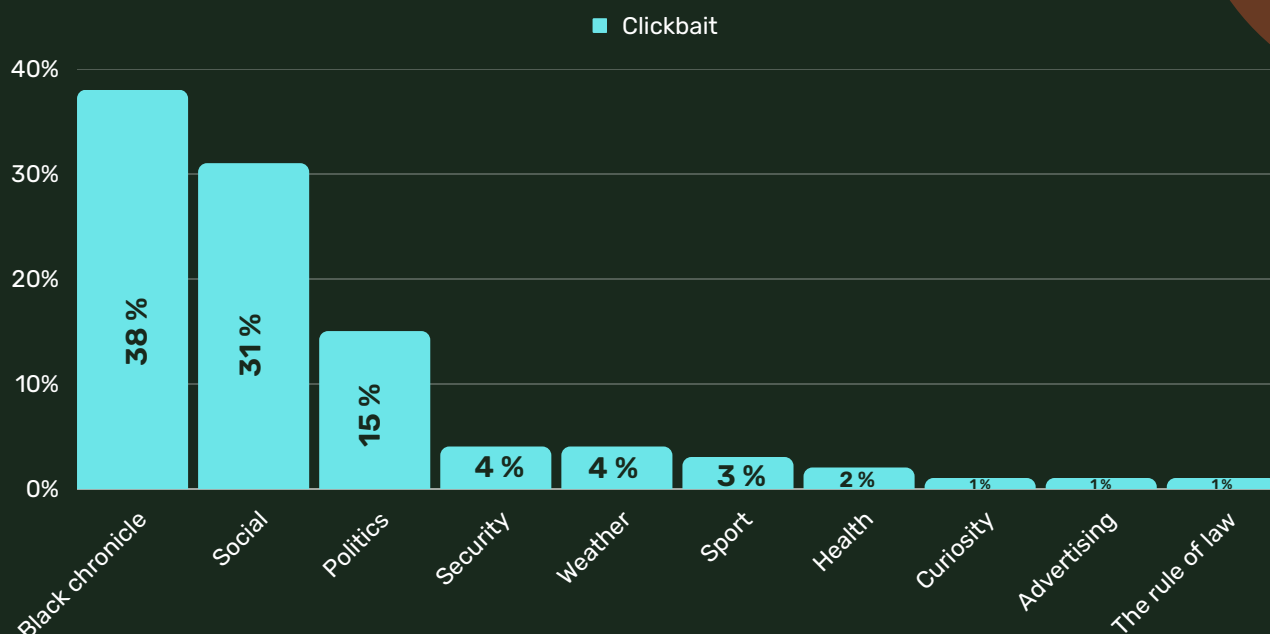|	Percentage
Black chronicle	38 %
Social	31 %
Politics	15 %
Security	4 %
Weather	4 %
Sport	3 %
Health	2 %
Curiosity	1%
Advertising	1%
The rule of law	1%

Fig 4. Areas in which there was the most misinformation in the "Clickbait" category during the six-month period (January–June 2023)

[22] See "hibrid.info's" fact-checking methodology.

Comparison between two six-month periods (July-December 2022 and January-June 2023):

Comparison of the data shows some differences in terms of creating misinformative content between these two main categories. In the period January-June 2023, although disinformation dominated almost all months, there was a fluctuation between disinformation and the clickbait category, each taking turns in first and second place respectively.

This can be explained by the fact that political developments and security in northern Kosovo and Kosovo-Serbia relations dictated media reports for disinformation and clickbait, especially during July and December 2022 when there was a heightened dynamic of these political developments, as well as there was more disinformation than clickbait.
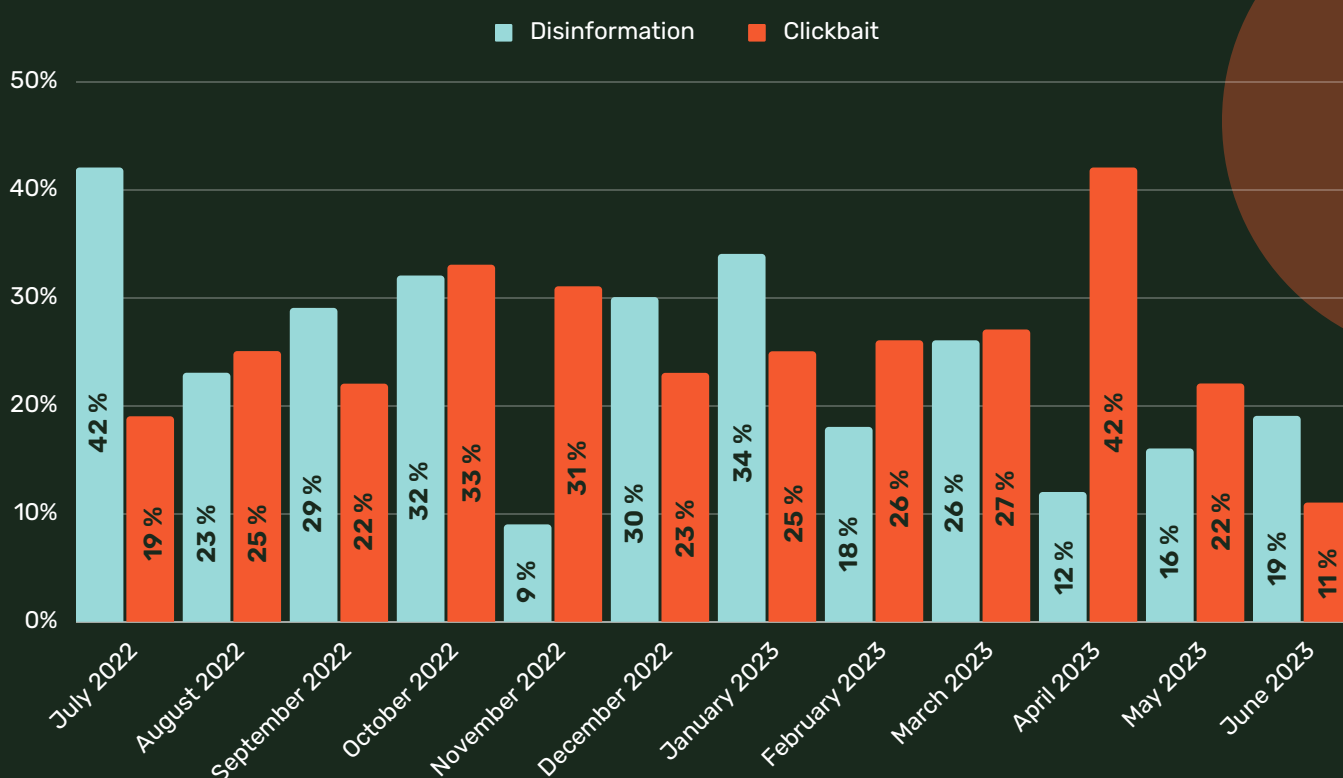

Fig 5. Comparison of "Disinformation" and "Clickbait" categories between two six-month periods

2. MISINFORMATION TOPICS

During this six-month period, similarly to the previous six-month period, the north of Kosovo has been the main topic of misinformation dissemination by various media with 10%. If the North is also added the topic of relations between Kosovo and Serbia (4%), then both together make up to 14% of publications during these six months. In these misinformation contents, the media has mainly published articles about political and security topics in the context of developments in the northern part of the country related to the ongoing tensions, as well as the distortion of the situation regarding the status of the Serbian community in that part of the country.

This can be attributed not only to developments related to this issue, but also due to the fact that the Government of Kosovo has made the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue priority, where the north is a key part of the dialogue, as well as the debates on national frequency television in Kosovo, which give great importance to political debates and the north is an integral part of these debates from commentators and political analysts. These two elements directly or indirectly influence the creation and dissemination of misinformation about the North by media in the Albanian language [23].In addition, Serbian-language media continue to dissemina-disinformation about the north of Kosovo, claiming without facts or verification that Serbian citizens in the north are discriminated, intimidated and threatened by the state institutions of Kosovo. Publications of the media in Serbian language are mostly considered as disinformation, conspiracy theories, manipulation of facts and unverified content. According to statistics, 58% of misinformation about the north is created and disseminated by publishers in Albanian language and 39% from media in Serbian language.

Another topic discussed about the dissemination of misinformation is the constant media reporting in Albanian language for various murders by 5%. These publications have mainly received clickbait ratings and what they have in common is that in the titles it is not clear where these murders have taken place, but in the text content it is clarified that they did not take place in Kosovo. Such publications have been frequently reported by media in Albanian language, which can disinform readers that such events have occurred in Kosovo. Other topics that have served to create misinformation have been those about the television program "BBVA", the earthquake in Turkey, the gifting wealth, etc.

[23] Focus group with media experts organized by "hibrid.info". Pristina, May 22, 2023.
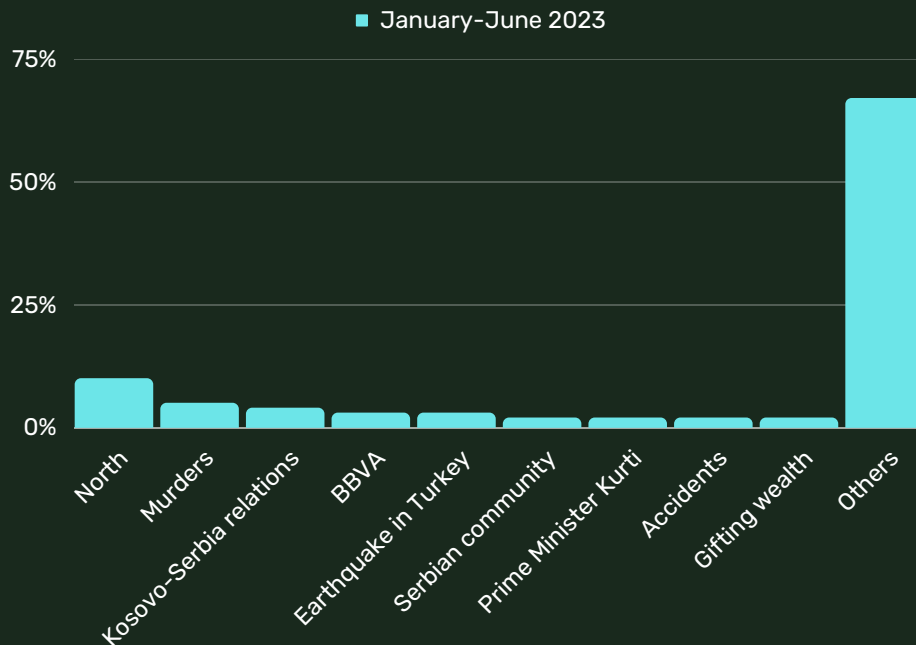
Fig 6. Main topics of misinformation during the six-month period (January-June 2023)

Comparison between two six-month periods (July-December 2022 and January-June 2023):

The topic of northern Kosovo has been predominant during both six-month periods, according to monitoring findings from "hibrid.info". However, in the period from July to December 2022, media sources were covering the north more than in the subsequent period from January to June 2023, which was at 10%. The difference between these two periods is in the treatment of other topics for the creation and dissemina-

-tion of misinformation. During the previous six-month period, prices, social schemes, visa liberalization, and other topics were heavily discussed due to their topicality, whereas this had changed during the January-June 2023 period where murders, the 'BBVA' television program, the earthquake in Turkey and other misinforming content had been among the most discussed topics after north.
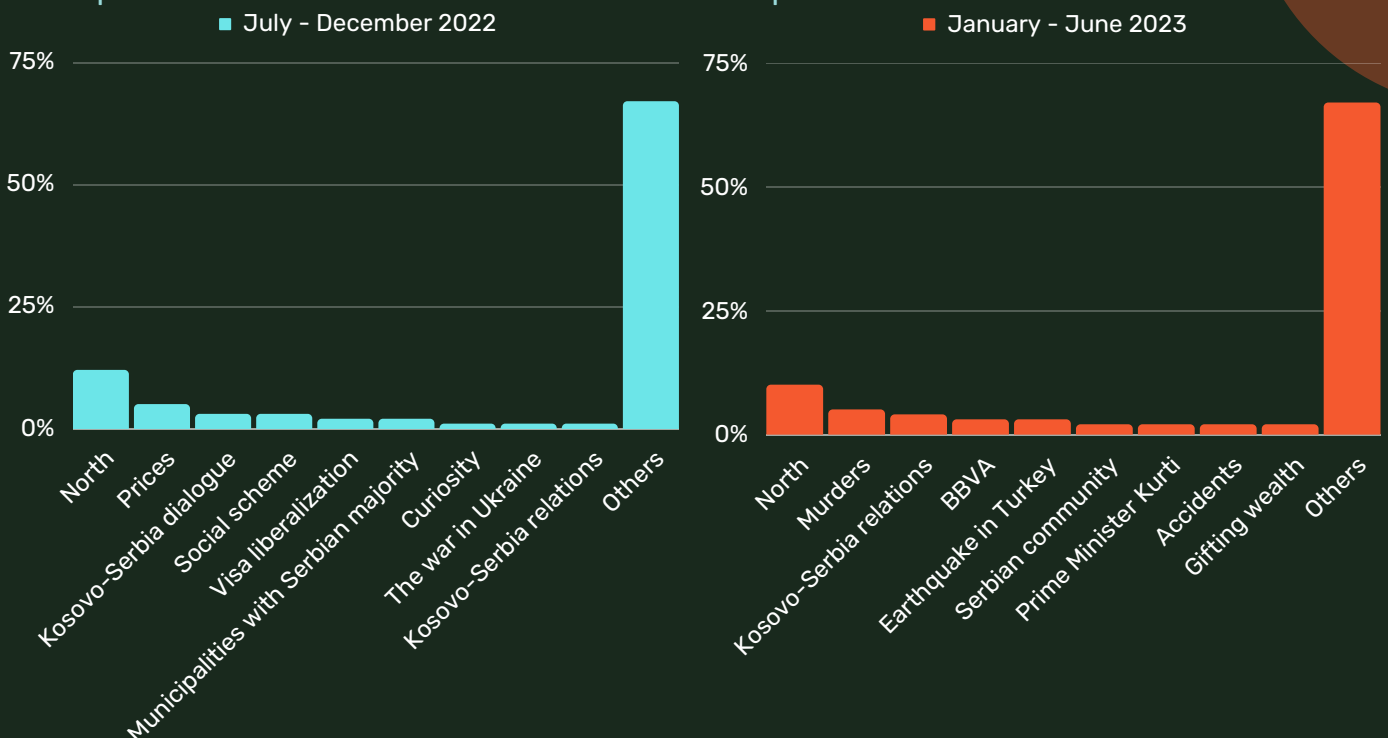

Fig 7. Comparison of the approach of the main topics of misinformation by the media between the two six-month periods

3. MISINFORMATION AREAS

During this six-month period, data from the monitoring revealed that the highest number of misinformative articles published were also in the political area with 25%, similar to that of misinformation topics where northern Kosovo as a political topic has dominated. In second place are misinformation in the social area with

21%, with a difference of 4% compared to the political area.

One of the innovations of this report are the misinformation articles on black chronicle, where 18% of the monitored articles are in this area, while the misinforming contents on security are only fourth with 16%.
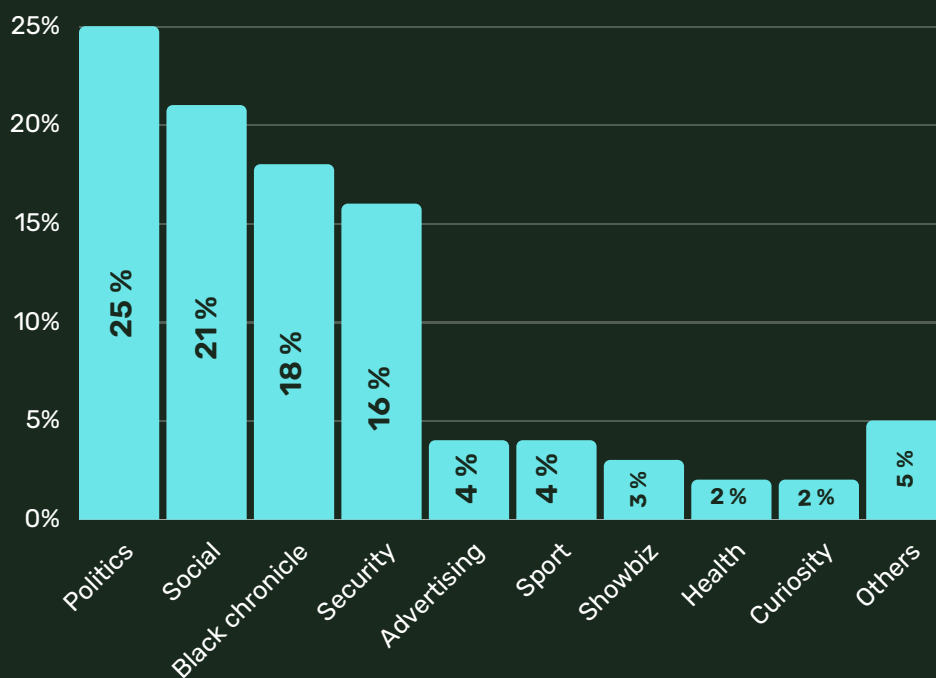

Fig 8. Main areas of misinformation during the six-month period (January-June 2023)

In the political field, misinformation has been mainly assessed as disinformation, fake news, and clickbait, while those with social themes have been rated as clickbait, scam, and disinformation. Most clickbait ratings of the black chronicle publications have been given for security area that have been rated as disinformation, fake news, and unverified content.

The distinguishing characteristic of these topical areas is that almost all publications with misinformation in the social and black chronicle areas have been created and disseminated by the media in the Albanian language. 47% of the articles in the security area have been published by media in the Serbian language and 50% by publishers in the Albanian language. Most political area

publications have been published and disseminated mainly by publishers in the Albanian language (around 60%) and the rest by media in the Serbian language (37%).
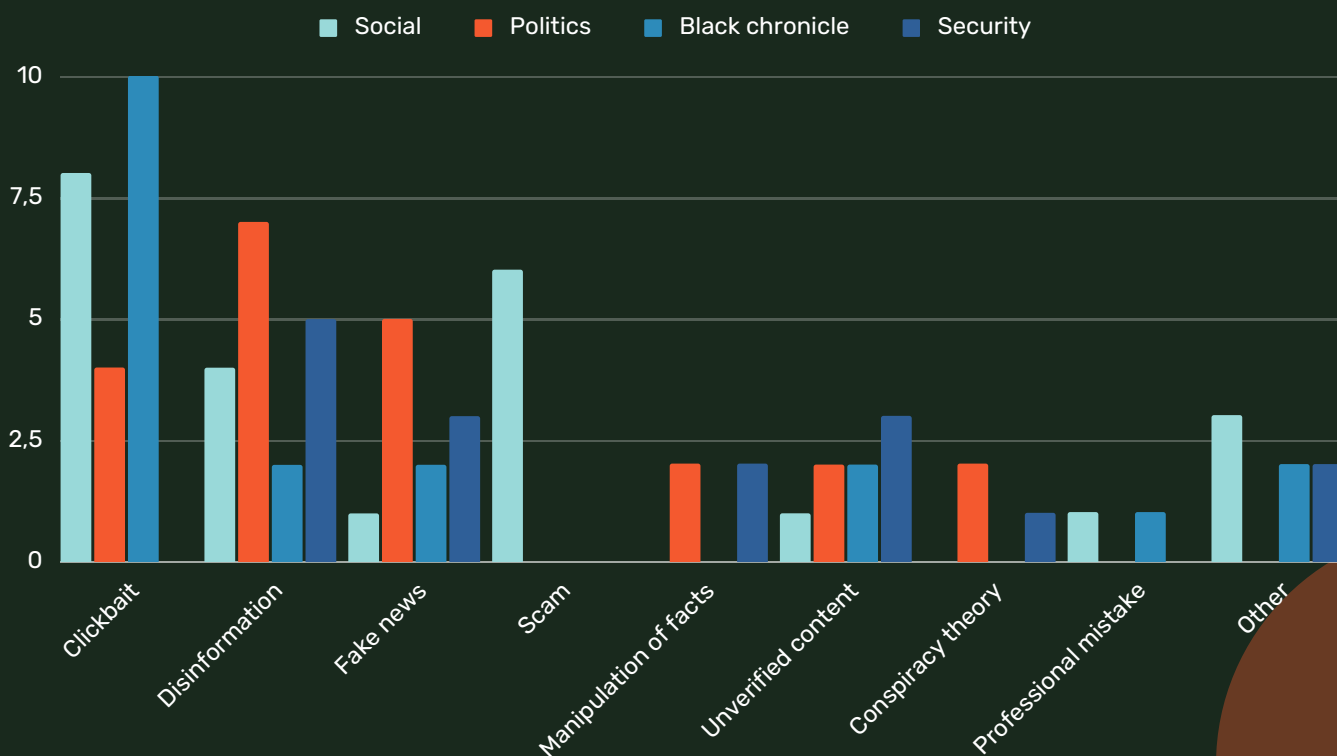

Fig 9. Evaluation of misinformative articles by misinformation categories based on thematic areas during the six-month period (January-June 2023)

Comparison between two six-month periods (September-December 2022 and January-June 2023):

The major difference between the two six-month periods in terms of thematic areas is that there were 15% fewer publications in the political area compared to the previous six-month period (from 40% to 25%). Hybrid.info has begun measuring "areas of misinformative articles" since September 2022, so data for measurements in this category for July and August 2022 are missing. For the last four months of the previous period, political misinformation has overwhelmingly dominated over other areas with 40%, followed by social area with 22%, security with 16%, and sport with 9%. In the period of January-June 2023, political topics dominated over other misinformation areas, but it was noted that the gap between political areas (25%) and social areas (21%) had narrowed by 4%. Another important finding is that media in Albanian language have published significantly

more articles about black chronicle this period with 18%, (in comparison to the previous period when they were only 1%), while security area has been ranked fourth with 16% not changing percentage from the previous period.

In this period, the difference betweenthe two periods can be

attributed to the tendency of publishers in the Albanian language to publish more clickbait articles, which increased the number of publications in the social and black chronicle area, while at the same time affecting the decrease in the percentage of misinformed content in the political and social area.
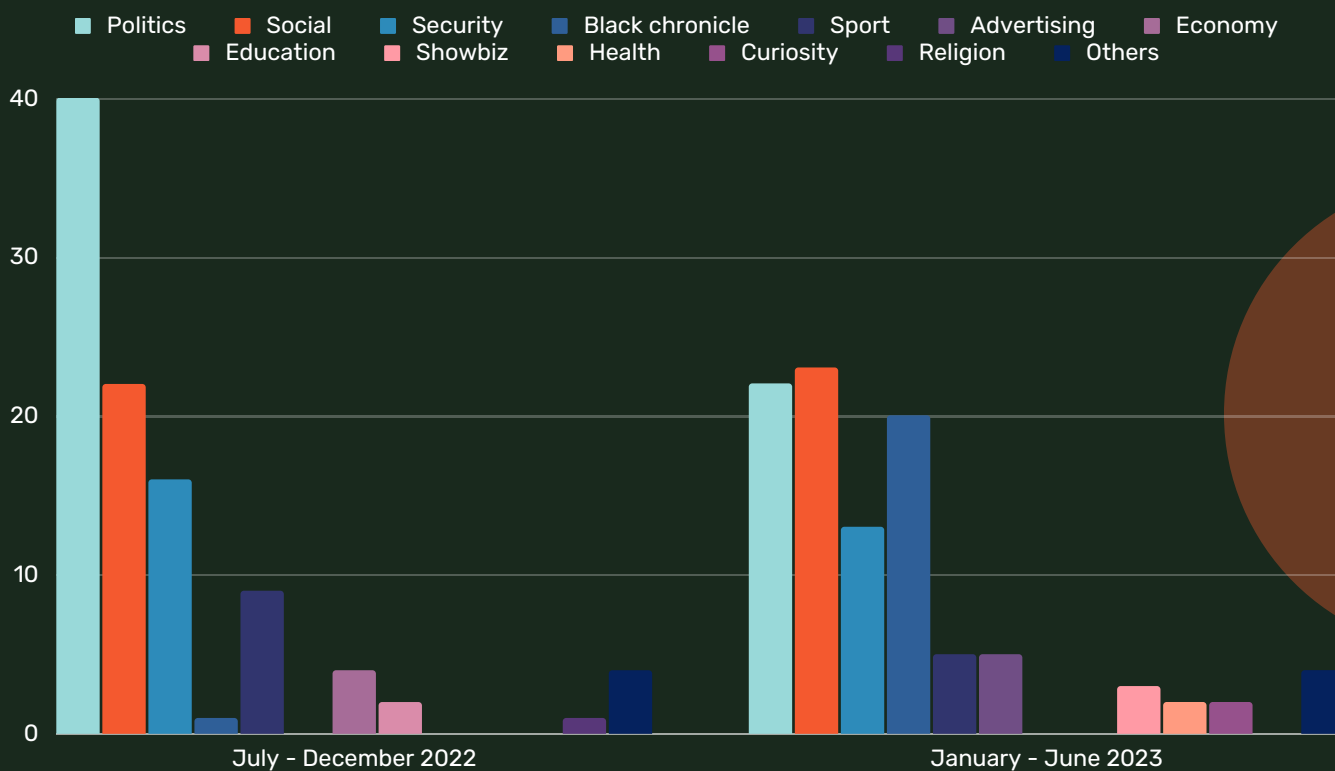

Fig 10. Comparison of the main areas of misinformation from the media between the two six-month periods

4. TYPES OF MISINFORMATION PUBLISHERS

In its first six-month report covering the period from July to December 2022, "hibrid.info" has measured the types of publishers (operators who publish and disseminate misinformative content or media) in real media and suspicious portals.

Starting from January 2023, "hibrid.info" also monitor social media, specifically different pages, channels, and profiles that publish misinformation about Kosovo in various social media (Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, etc.). It is of particular importance to consider their widespread use not only by media and publishers of misinformative content, but also by readers and large audiences in Kosovo.

During this six-month period (January-June 2023), real media have disseminated the most misinformative content about developments in Kosovo, with 46%. These are followed by social media pages and profiles with 38%, and suspicious portals with 16%.
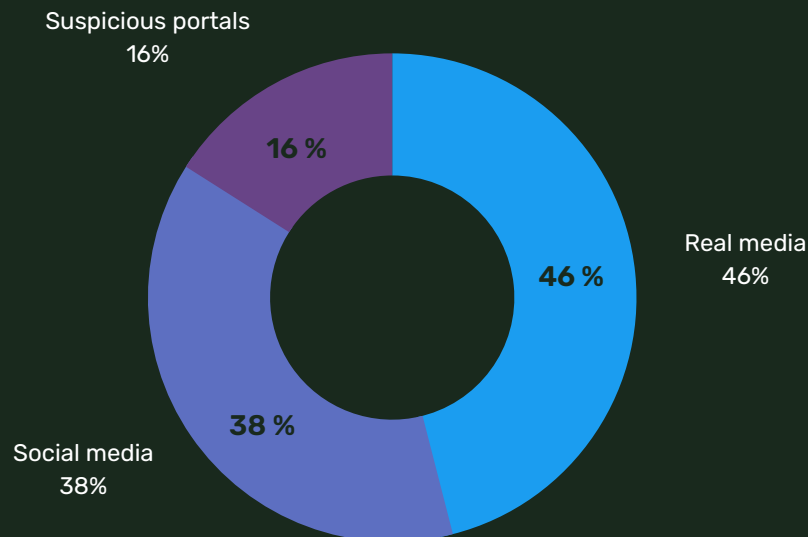
Fig 11. Types of publishers (media and operators) that have disseminated misinformative articles during the six-month period (January-June 2023)

The focus of various publishers, including the media, in disseminating misinformation in Kosovo has been detailed during this six-month period in the figure below. The most widespread content of misinformation across real media was found to be clickbait, on social media most of the content disseminated was fake news, and suspicious portals mainly disseminated disinformation.

Fig 12. Misinformative content disseminated by publishers based on misinformation evaluation categories during the six-month period (January-June 2023)

During this six-month period, data confirms the trend that various publishers created and disseminated the most misinformative content on political topics, followed by social issues and black chronicles. Misinformation articles in the security area were much less.

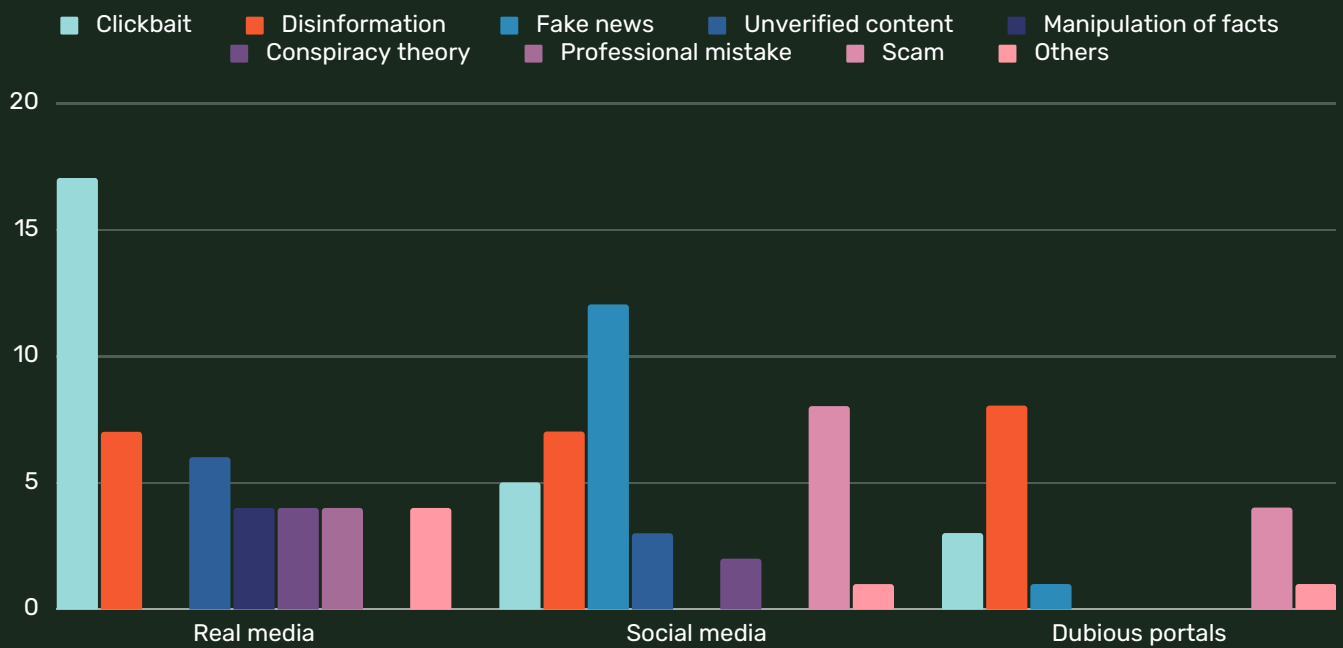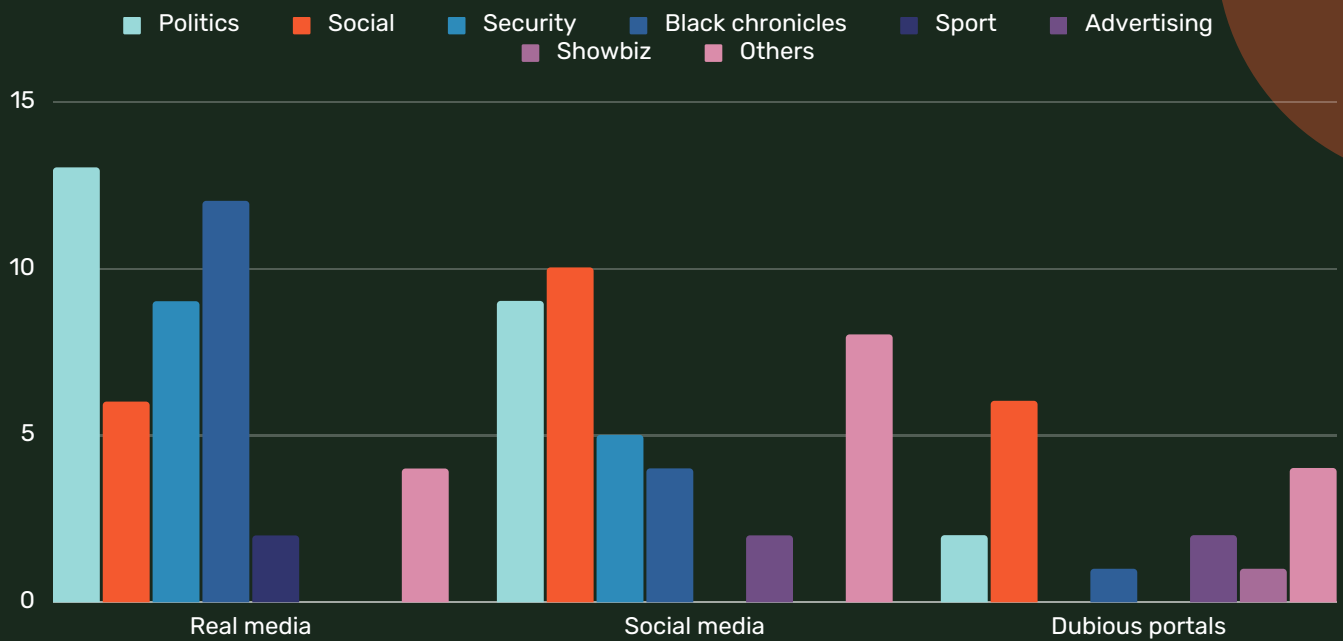*Fig 13. Misinformative content disseminated by publishers based on thematic areas during the six-month period (January-June 2023)*

The real media have most frequently published articles with misinformative content in both six-month periods. During the previous period, social media were not monitored and consequently, the percentage of misinformation in real media (53%) and suspicious portals (47%) was higher. With the inclusion of social media, a drastic drop in suspicious portal postings (16%) is observed, taking third place and below 50% of real media postings, considering that social media have

been utilized for publication of misinformative material from various pages and profiles at 38%. It can also be observed by the monitors that another fact regarding the decrease of misinformation publications from suspicious portals is noticed. A portion of them have been converted into other commercial pages, some have reduced their activity, and others have started to disseminate more materials related to the showbiz and gossip area.

■ Real media   ■ Social media   ■ Dubious portals

July - December 2022
- 53 %
- 47 %

January - June 2023
- 46 %
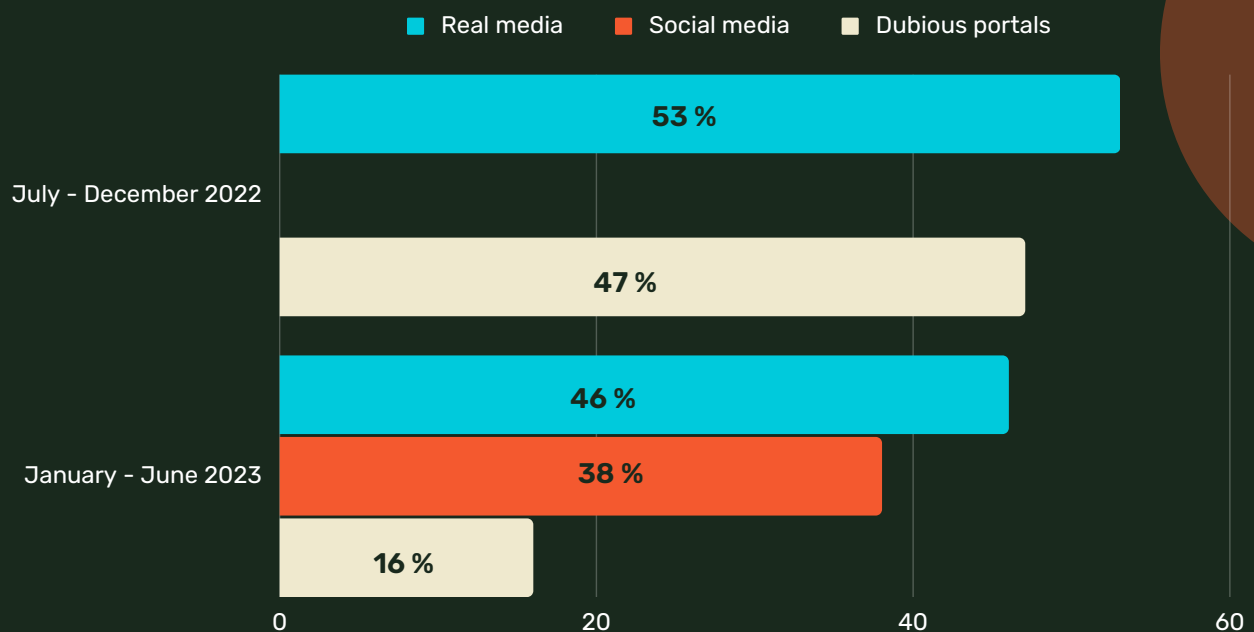- 38 %
- 16 %

(axis: 0, 20, 40, 60)

Fig 14. Comparison of the types of publishers (media and operators) that have disseminated misinformative articles during the two six-month periods

5. MISINFORMATIVE PUBLICATIONS BY PUBLISHERS IN ALBANIAN AND SERBIAN LANGUAGE

Monitoring activities have revealed that misinformation about and concerning developments in Kosovo is most commonly published in Albanian and Serbian language, while publishers in other languages create and disseminate much less misinformation about Kosovo. The platform hybrid.info has made some changes to its monitoring methodology in 2023 for the purpose of measuring predominantly misinformation publications from publishers in Albanian and Serbian language.

Publications in Albanian are measured by all publishers including: i) real media, ii) various pages and profiles on social media and iii) suspicious portals. Meanwhile, only real media in the Serbian language are measured for misinformative articles from publishers, because they are also the main creators and disseminators of misinformation about Kosovo [24].

Over the six-month period (January-June 2023), publishers in the Albanian language have published the most misinformative articles overall at 81%, including all types of publishers in the Albanian language (real media with 29%, various pages on social media with 36%, and suspicious portals with 16%).

Publications in other languages include those in Serbian, all of which have been published in the real media in Serbian language with 17% and in other language media (English and Russian) with 2%, mainly on social media pages.

The high percentage of media publications in Albanian and the low percentage of articles from the media in Serbian can be explained by two reasons: i) the inclusion of social media in measuring misinformation articles has naturally increased publications in Albanian, and ii) in Serbian language publications, only real media in Serbian language (but not social media and suspicious portals) are measured. These two factors have led to a much higher percentage of publications in the Albanian language during this period.

In the figure below, and in other figures of this sub-section of the report, data only between real media publications in both languages, Albanian and Serbian, are compared. It is observed that almost two-thirds of real media publications (65%) have been published in Albanian, while more than one-third (or 35%) of them from real media in Serbian.

[24] Bokshi, A. (2023). The information disorder in the second period of 2022. Prishtina: ADS / hibrid.info. This is also confirmed by the monitoring data of the platform "hibrid.info" for the period January-June 2023.
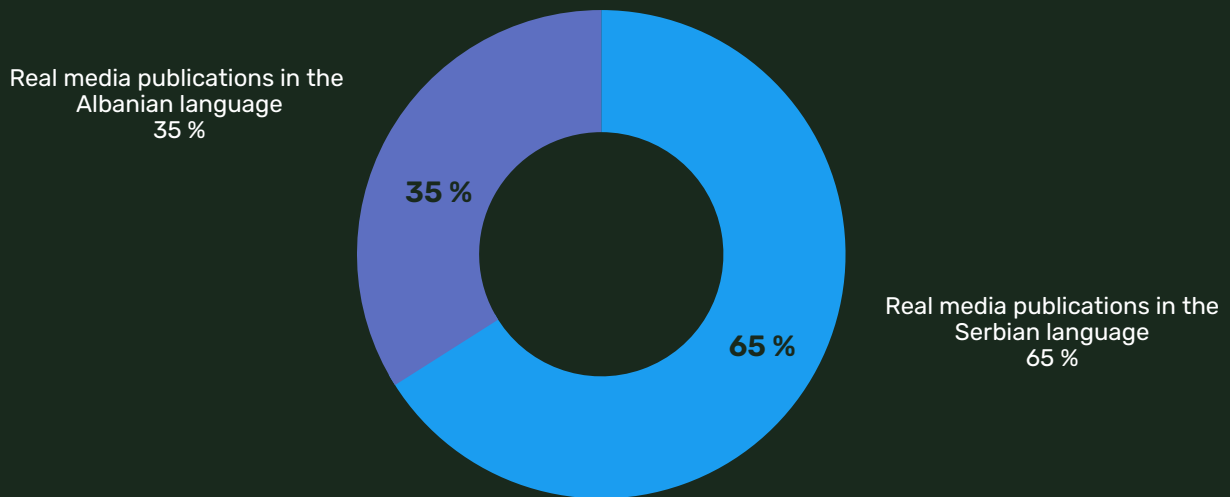
Fig 15. Misinformative publications of the real media in the Albanian language and in the Serbian language (January-June 2023)

According to categories of misinformation, the real media publications in Albanian and Serbian language confirm the tendency that real media publications in Albanian language publish more misinformative articles as clickbait (38%), scam (9%) or unverified content (9%), but much less misinform--ative content rated as disinformation (2%) or fake news (1%). In contrast, Serbian-language real media tend to publish more disinformation (12%), conspiracy theories (8%), and manipulation of facts (8%) related to developments in Kosovo.

Fig 16. Misinformative publications of real media in Albanian and Serbian language based on the misinformation categories during the six-month period (January-June 2023)

During this period, the media in Albanian language have a tendency to create and disseminate more misinformation about black chronicles (26%) and social area (12%) than in political ones (11%). On the other hand, Serbian real media in this period have mainly disseminated misinformation about Kosovo in the politics area (19%) and security (16%) as.

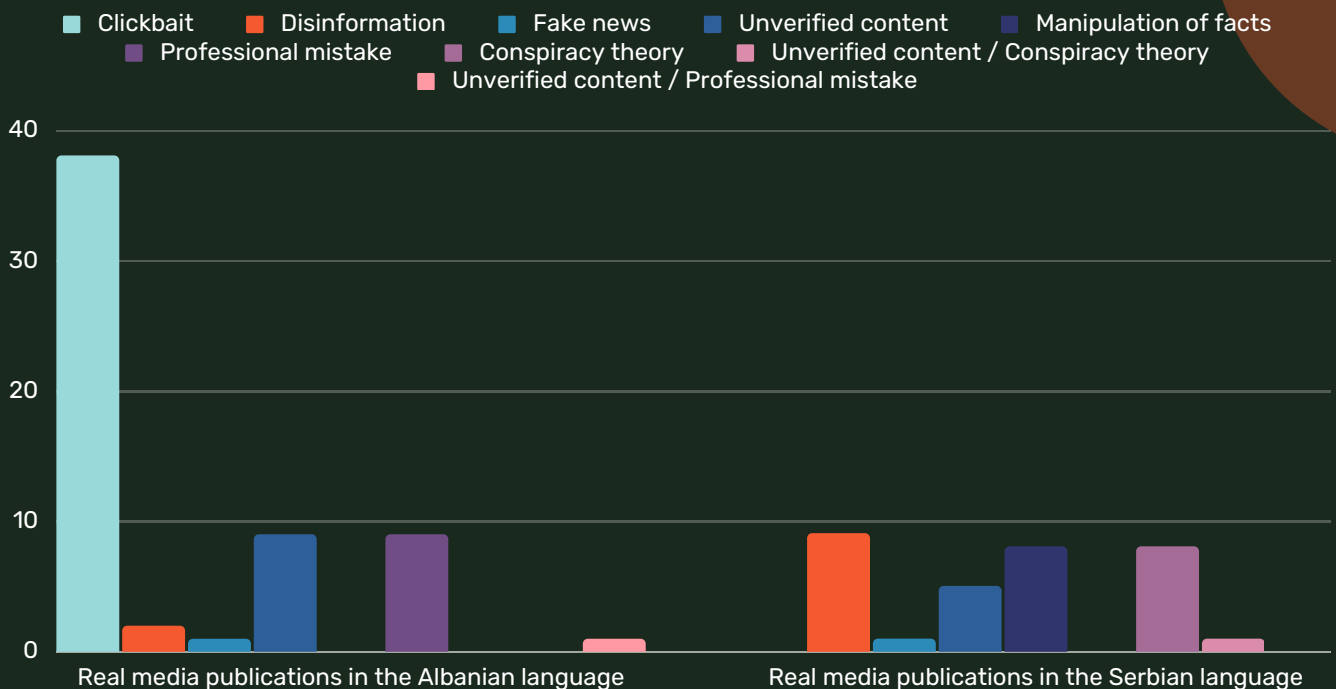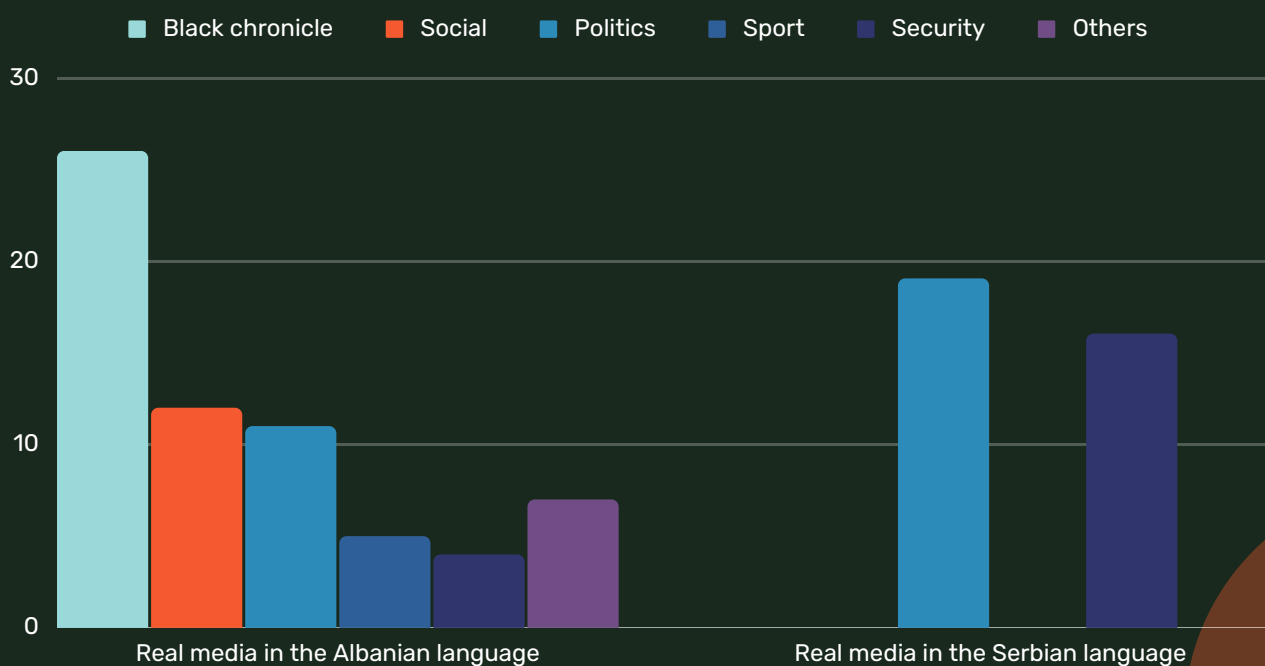*Fig 17. Misinformative publications of the real media in the Albanian and Serbian languages based on thematic areas during the six-month period (January-June 2023)*

Comparison between two six-month periods (July-December 2022 and January-June 2023):

During the previous six-month period [25] (July-December 2022), the media were measured and categorized according to their geographical aspect, based on the country where they are registered as legal entities (local, regional, local/regional, international and media in Albanian language managed by diaspora activists) [26].

A comparison between two 6-month periods (see Figure 19) can only be made for the real media, since there is no data on the origin country for other publishers, such as suspicious portals, while social media in the previous 6-month period were not monitored.

[25] Bokshi, A. (2023). The information disorder in the second period of 2022, p. 19. Pristina: ADS / hibrid.info.
[26] The definition and meaning of these types of publishers are explained in the glossary.

52% of the local real media (referring to the media of Kosovo) had published the most misinformative content during that period (July-December 2022), followed by 39% of regional real media, almost all of which are from Serbia, as well as 6% of local/regional media. Other real media, such as those in the Albanian language from the diaspora and international media had much fewer misinformative publications of around 3%.

In this six-month period (January-June 2023), local media have been replaced by 'media in Albanian language' and regional media by 'media in Serbian language' due to the fact that regional media, which create and disseminate misinformation about Kosovo, are mostly media in Serbian language. It has been revealed through data comparison that there was a marked increase of 65%, (13% more than the previous period), in the publications of misinformation by real media in the Albanian language during this six-month period, whereas the content of misinformation disseminated by real media in the Serbian language experienced a slight decrease from 39% to 35% (a decrease of 4% from the previous period).

■ July – December 2022

Real local media	52 %
Real regional media	39 %
Real local/regional media	6 %
Others (real media)	3 %

0   20   40   60

■ January – June 2023

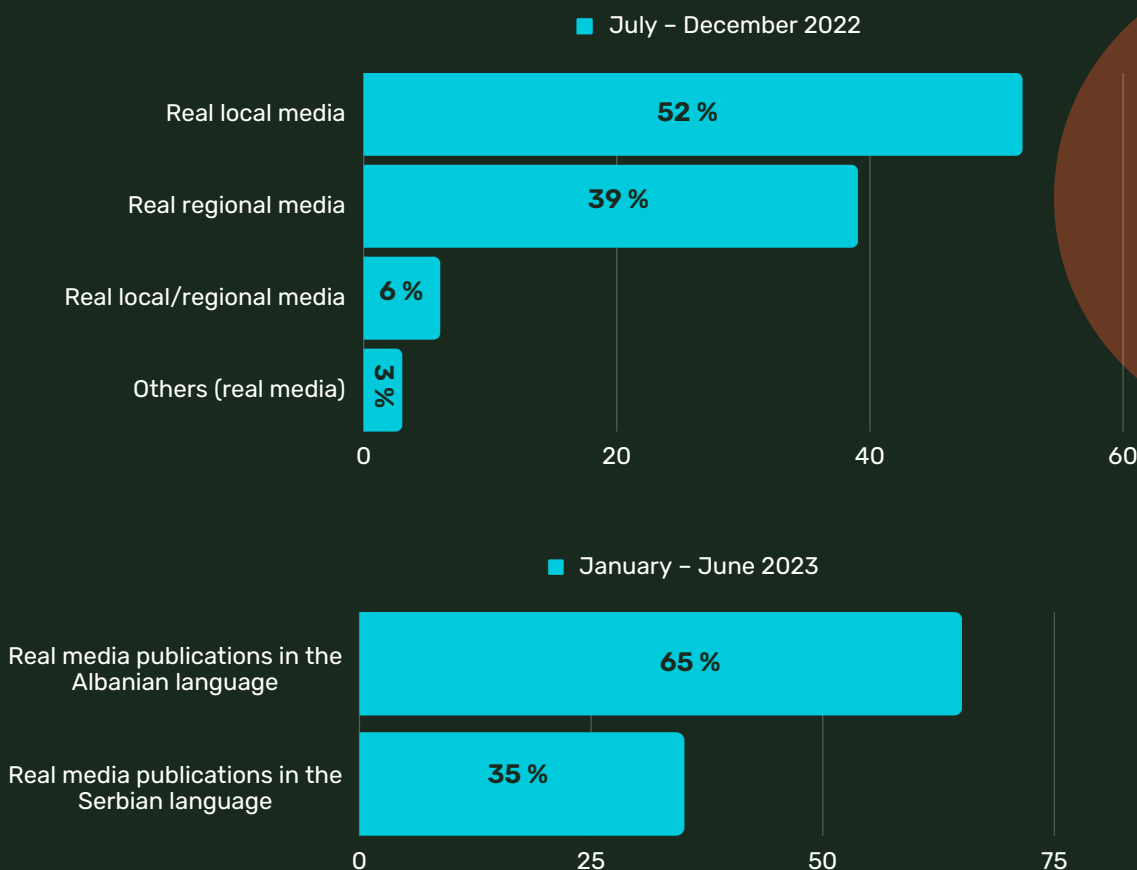|	
Real media publications in the Albanian language	65 %
Real media publications in the Serbian language	35 %

0   25   50   75

Fig 18. Misinformative real media publications in Albanian, Serbian and other languages during two six-month periods

6. TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

For the first time, this six-monthly report provides a detailed analysis of the publication and dissemination of misinformative articles about Kosovo on social media from various publishers. Only articles published on social media are discussed here (not including real media and suspicious portals, which were analyzed in the section titled "Types of Misinformation Publishers"). In the first report for the previous period (July-December 2022), these data were not analyzed because "hibrid.info" had started monitoring misinformative content on social media from January 2023.

During this period, Facebook has been the primary social media for disseminating misinformative articles about events in Kosovo, with 60% of them. For this period, TikTok was followed by 34%, while other social media such as Twitter with 3%, Reddit with 1%, Telegram with 1%, and YouTube with 1% had far fewer misinformative postings.
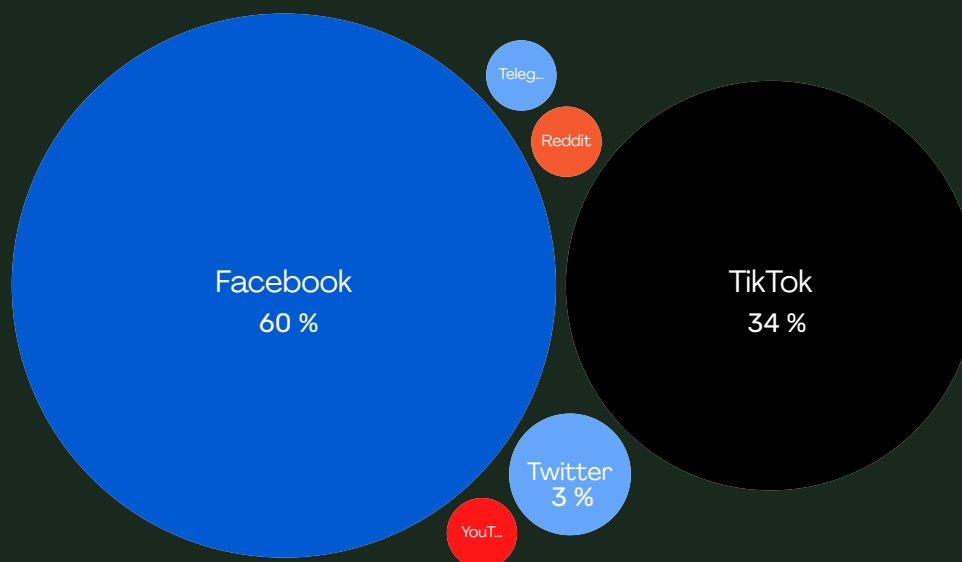
Fig 19. Misinformative publications on social media during the six-month period (January-June 2023)

In addition to social media, this report also investigates the interaction on social media concerning the publication and dissemination of misinformation. This is another innovation of the platform "hybrid.info" to provide more detailed data and to simplify the impact of social media on misinformation and information disorder in the digital space in general.

The analysis of publishers in social media is made through these categories: pages, accounts, profiles, medias, official pages and different channels managed by social media users, which they utilize to disseminate misinformation depending on developments concerning Kosovo.

Following figure shows that various pages on Facebook that have disseminated the most misinformation for this period with 50%. About 27% of misinformation on TikTok is disseminated by accounts, while about 23% of other misinformation is disseminated by various publishers on other social media.

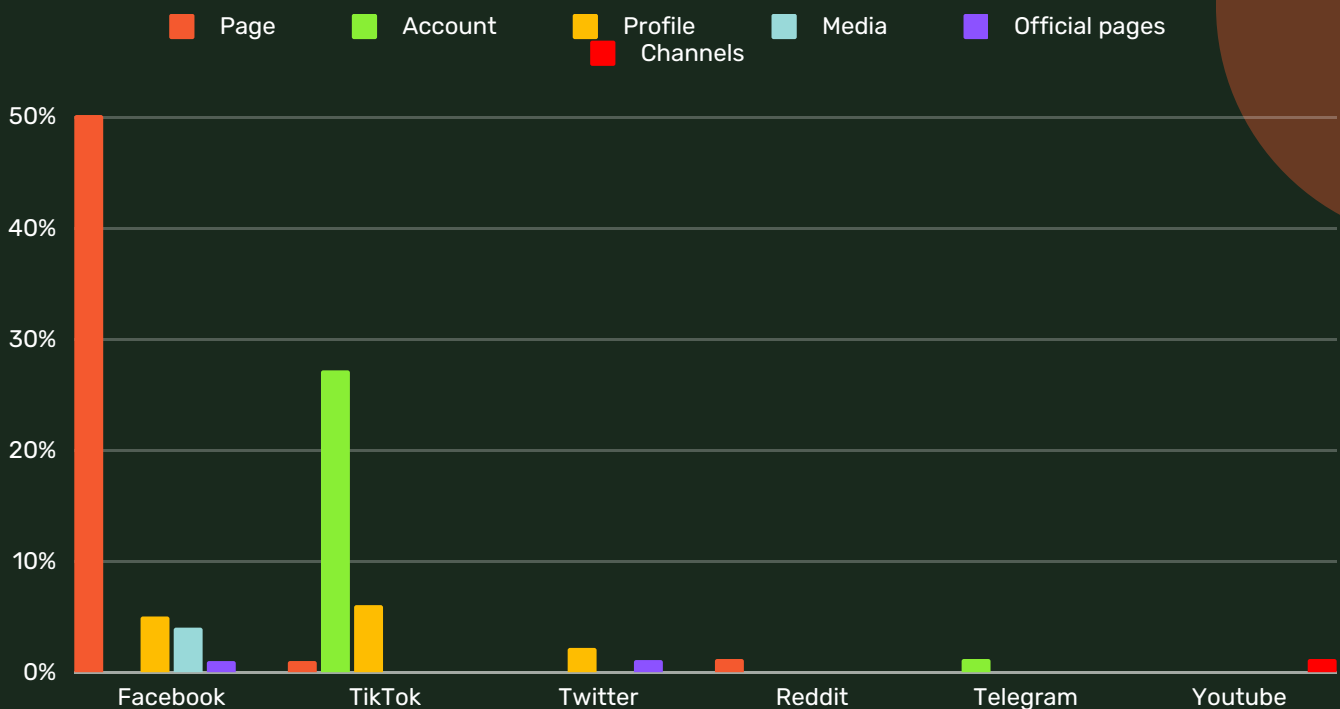*Fig 20. Publishers of misinformative articles on social media during the six-month period (January-June 2023)*

In comparison to real media and suspicious portals, in social media have been published mostly fake news, scams, disinformation, and clickbait posts (see Figure 12). Almost all misinformative articles in social media created and disseminated in Albanian language.

In the following, social media is analyzed in connection with categories of misinformation and misinforming themes disseminated by publishers on these media.

01. Facebook

Facebook users have created and disseminated the most misinformation rated as scams at 17%, disinformation at 15%, and clickbait at 13%, followed by articles with fake news motives at 6% etc. The dissemination of misinformation on Facebook has primarily been in the social area at 22%, politics at 11%, and black chronicle at 8%, while security had a lower percentage of 6%.

02. TikTok

The highest rate of misinformation on TikTok had been for fake news at 21%, and in other categories such as conspiracy theories (6%), scams (4%), and disinformation (2%). Compared to publishers on Facebook, during this six-month period, political distortions have been published mostly on TikTok, with 10% dominating the most and security with 7%. Articles providing misinformation about the black chronicle and social issues are in much lower percentage, with 3% each of them.

03. Twitter, YouTube dhe Reddit

Less misinformative articles have been disseminated by audiences on other social media such as Twitter (3%), Reddit (1%), Telegram (1%) and YouTube (1%) in comparison to Facebook and TikTok. These two last ones remain the most widely used social media in Kosovo, thus there is noticeably less content on other social media.

Misinformation categories
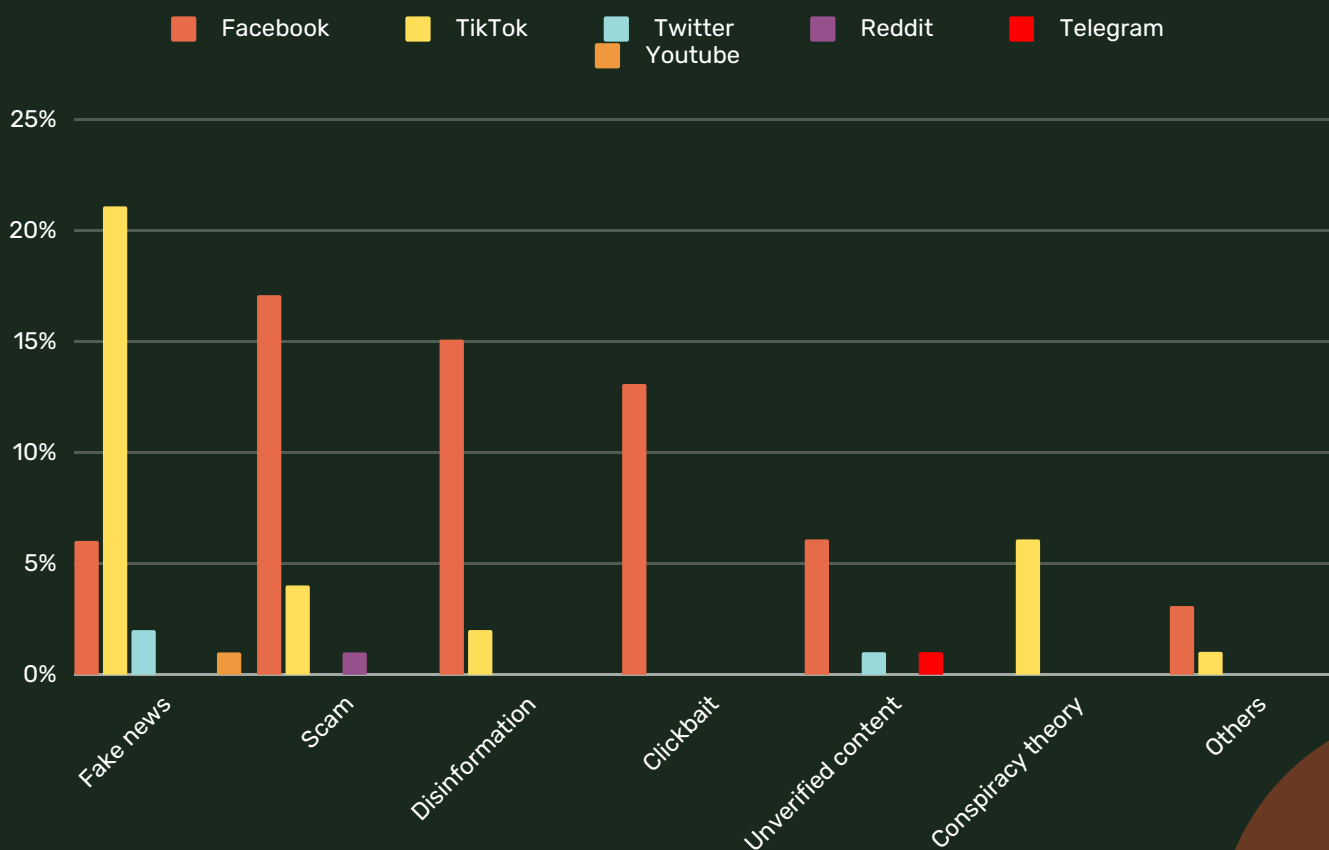
Misinformation thematic areas

Fig 21. Publication and dissemination of misinformative content on social media based on misinformation categories and thematic areas during the six-month period (January–June 2023)

7. THE MOST DISCUSSED INSTITUTIONS AND PERSONALITIES

During this period, monitoring of misinformation has shown that political and security institutions, as well as political personalities, have been among the most discussed.

This tendency is especially observed among institutions in question, where the Kosovo Police is ranked first with 30%, which has been most reported from Serbian 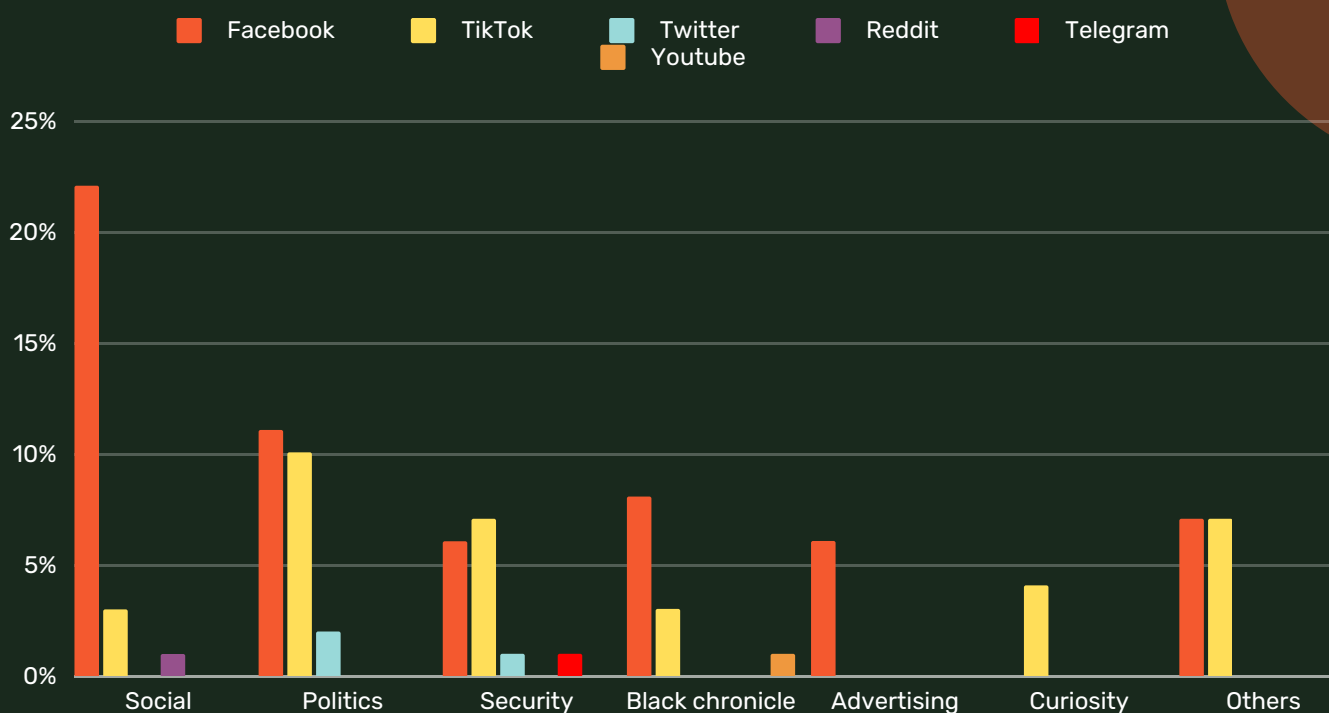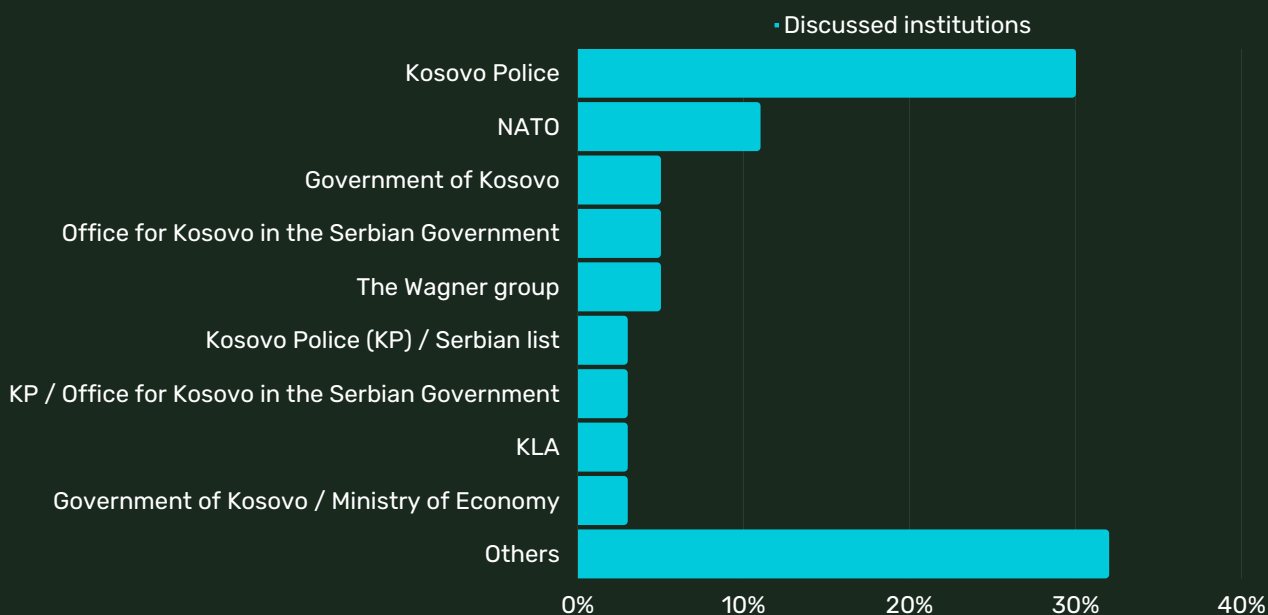language media (62%) compared to Albanian language publishers (38%), in the misinformation reports on developments in the north of Kosovo. The Kosovo Police have also been discussed of links to the Serbian List and the Kosovo Office in the Serbian Government by media in the Serbian language. This is followed by some misinformation about NATO at 11%, the Kosovo Government at 5% and other institutions presented in Figure 22.

Of public figures, the most discussed is Kosovo's Prime Minister, Albin Kurti with 27% of the publications. As a prominent personality at the head of the Kosovo Government, Kurti has been mainly discussed by Serbian language media (51%) rather than Albanian language publishers (46%). Serbian language media, through misinforming articles not facts-based, have discussed Kurti in relation to the Association of Serb Majority Municipalities, Kosovo's North, the Serbian community in Kosovo, etc. Misinformative articles disseminated by the media in Albanian language have discussed about Kurti in relation to war crimes, Kosovo-US relations, as well as those between Kosovo and Serbia and other topics. Other personalities discussed about were Luiz Ejlli with 4%, Vedat Muriqi with 4%, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama with 3% and other personalities.

Discussed institutions

Kosovo Police	
NATO	
Government of Kosovo	
Office for Kosovo in the Serbian Government	
The Wagner group	
Kosovo Police (KP) / Serbian list	
KP / Office for Kosovo in the Serbian Government	
KLA	
Government of Kosovo / Ministry of Economy	
Others	

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%
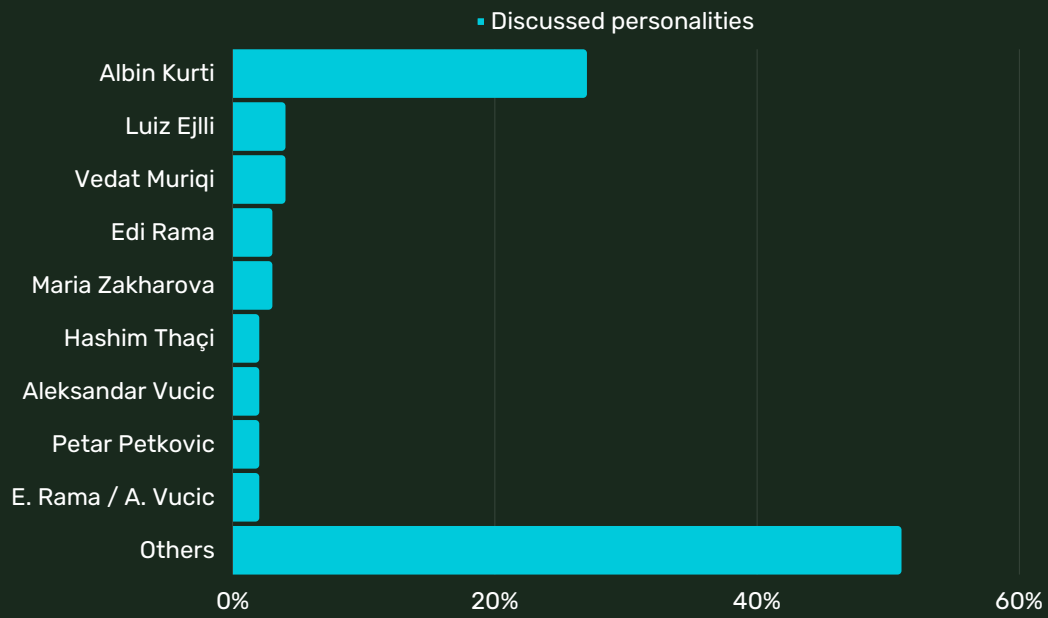
Fig 22. The most discussed institutions and personalities by misinformative media publications during the six-month period (January-June 2023)

Comparison between two six-month periods (July-December 2022 and January-June 2023):

The comparison between two six-month periods shows that the political and security institutions have also dominated in July-December 2022, where the Kosovo Police is the main institution discussed. The difference is in the percentage (from 9% in the previous period to 30% in this period), where a significant increase in misinformation targeting the Kosovo Police is observed in this period. Other institutions discussed between the two periods are almost the same (with some exceptions).
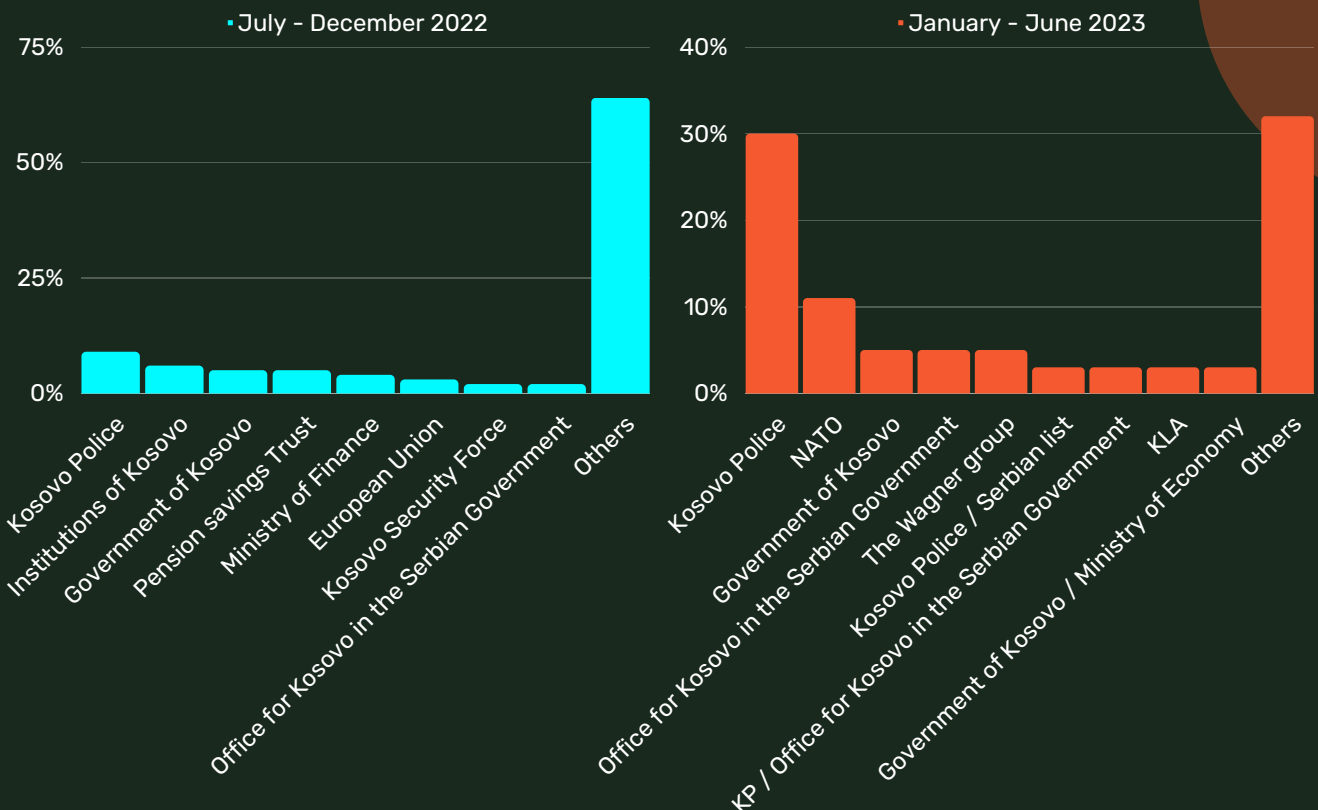
Fig 23. The most discussed institutions by misinformative media publications during two six-month periods

Prime Minister Kurti has been the most discussed about even during the previous period of 14% of publications compared to 27% in this period. This shows an increase of 13% in articles in which Kurti is placed in different contexts from misinformation of publishers in Albanian and Serbian language compared to the previous period. The difference between the first six-month period (July-December 2022) and the second six-month period (January-June 2023) lies in the coverage of other personalities..

■ July - December 2022

Personality	Percentage
Albin Kurti	~14%
Aleksandar Vucic	~3%
A. Kurti / G. Rakic	~1.5%
A. Kurti / P. Petkovic	~1%
Arian Agushi (Gold AG)	~1%
Dejan Pantic	~1%
Donika Gervalla	~1%
Elderly Nura	~1%
Others	~74%

■ January - June 2023

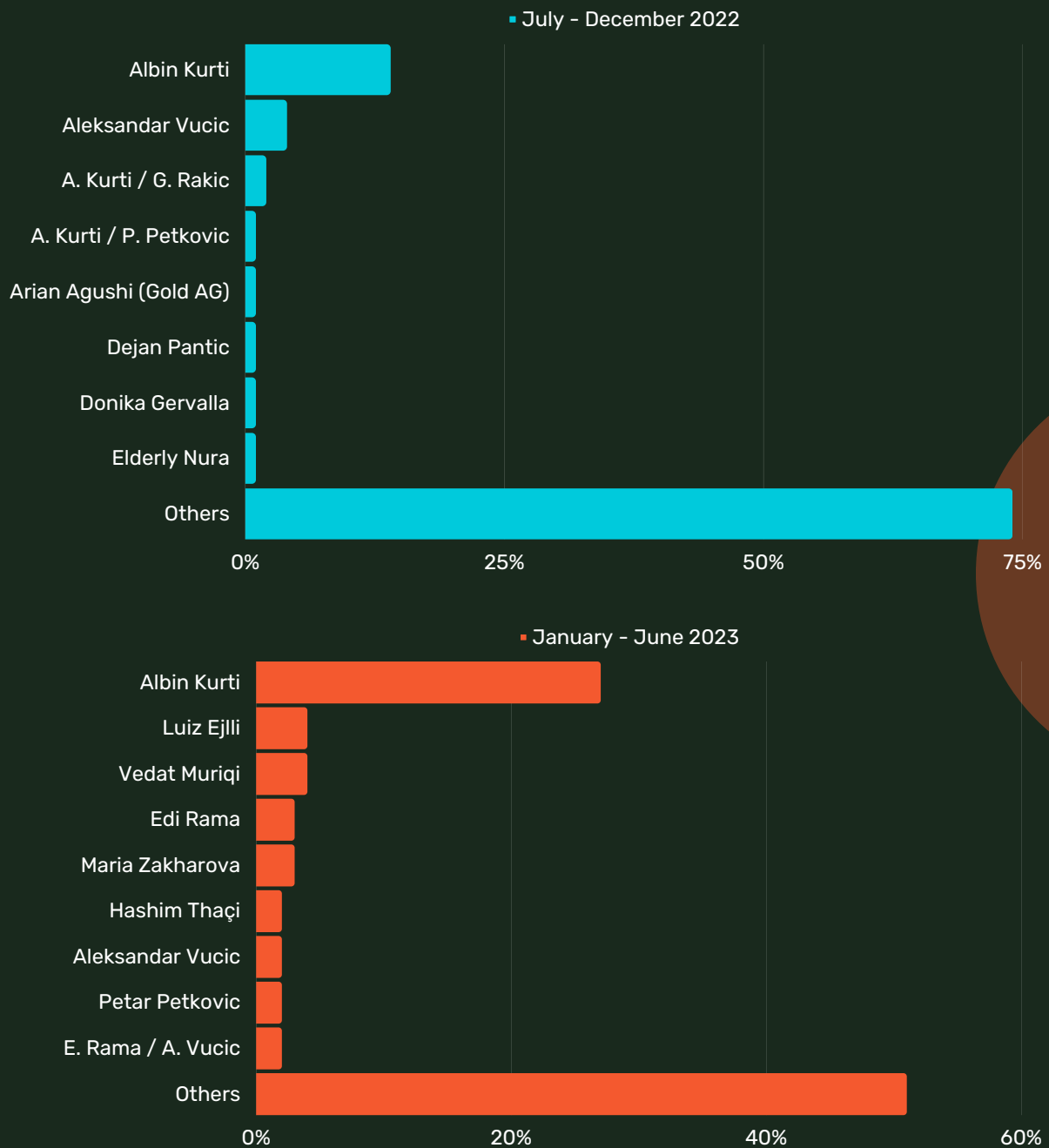| Personality	Percentage
Albin Kurti	~27%
Luiz Ejlli	~4%
Vedat Muriqi	~4%
Edi Rama	~3%
Maria Zakharova	~3%
Hashim Thaçi	~2%
Aleksandar Vucic	~2%
Petar Petkovic	~2%
E. Rama / A. Vucic	~2%
Others	~50%

Fig 24. The most discussed personalities by misinformative media publications during two six-month periods

V. PRACTICE AND JOURNALISTIC ENVIRONMENT: CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONTEXT

In Kosovo, media face various operational challenges and problems as functional and professional outlets. Recently, a large number of media have been created in Kosovo, including television and especially online media, while 468 media are registered as legal entities [27]. Since the COVID-19 pandemic in Kosovo, there are no more printed newspapers and, as a result of financial difficulties, they have closed down moving into the online space. Currently, the media environment in Kosovo consists of television, radio and online media, but also from the activities of various Kosovo media outlets on social media. The largest number of them are online media and out of the 468 media registered as legal entities, only 50 are enrolled in the Press Council of Kosovo [28] and are not registered as legal entities in relevant Kosovo institutions [29].

Although television is more conscientious in respecting journalistic ethics and providing the public with accurate information, the dissemination of misinformation, disinformation and fake news in Kosovo mainly takes place from a large part of the media operating in the online space, thus violating ethics and professional journalism standards [30].

The majority of online media in Kosovo operate with small staff, not more than five employees, and further lack the experience and professional capacities related to the accurate publishing of content in order to properly inform the public. Without these capabilities and necessary knowledge, part of the media and journalists are exposed to misinformation and disinformation, which are disseminated to the public[31].

The number of editors, proofreaders, and unclear practices regarding the ethics and journalism associated with publishing news abroad and improving or altering news in the publishing process, etc., are concerned with a very small number [32].

Research in 2022 shows that a significant portion of online media may be unprepared for the recognition and detection of misinformation [33]. In this case, the prevention and combat of misinformation and disinformation content becomes even more difficult in the absence of perhaps minimal

[27] Bokshi, A. (2023). The information disorder in the second period of 2022, p. 21. Pristina: ADS / hibrid.info.
[28] Ibidem, p.22.
[29] Focus group with media experts organized by "hibrid.info". Pristina, May 22, 2023.
[30] Ibidem.
[31] Bokshi, A. (2023). The information disorder in the second period of 2022, p. 21. Pristina: ADS / hibrid.info.
[32] Ondozi, Q. (2022). Misinformation, disinformation and fake news in online media in Kosovo, p. 8-9. Press Council of Kosovo.
[33] Ibidem, p.9.

knowledge for fact checking by online media (perhaps not all, but a significant part of them) and to counter misinformation.

One of the main problems of the media in Kosovo, both in legal and practical aspects, is the issue of ownership and financial transparency, which has also affected the information disorder [34]. Ownership of the media is not regulated by the current legislation in Kosovo in the media area and media experts have suggested that a legal framework for clarifying transparency and ownership of the media must urgently be addressed [35]. Media experts have also observed that the financial issue of media is among the biggest challenges because it pushes them to be under the influence of different interest groups such as businesses, political parties, governance, etc. and to push various financial and political agendas of these interest groups to gain financially or in other forms [36]. It can be particularly observed during elections in Kosovo, respectively the media reporting during pre-election campaigns [37].

In addition to the other identified issues, some of the other causes of information disorder are unclear/unknown sources of media funding (mainly online media) and the importation of foreign narratives into Kosovo by local media, especially those of Serbian media close to the power in Serbia and Russian media, which aim to propagate propaganda, through disinformation [38]. As for Russian media specifically, although officially blocked for the digital audience of Kosovo, "Sputnik" and "RT Balkan" have been accessible for some time for anyone looking to visit these websites on the internet. In terms of "Sputnik" being accessible to the digital audience in Kosovo, it is available on the international service and in Serbian language. The other medium, "Russia Today", is only available through the Balkan service - "RT Balkan" [39].

Media have traditionally been changing their domains and operating without interruption [40]. Although the Government of Kosovo had taken a decision to ban pro-Russian government media in Kosovo, after research conducted by hibrid.info it has been verified that access to these two Russian portals is now possible. Since March 2022, the Government of Kosovo had implemented a series of sanctions towards Russia, imposed by the European Union and the United States, in response to Russia's destabilizing actions related to the situation in Ukraine, among which was also the prohibition of broadcasting Russian propaganda media in Kosovo [41].

[34] Focus group with media experts organized by "hibrid.info". Pristina, May 22, 2023.
[35] Ibidem.
[36] Ibidem.
[37] Ibidem.
[38] Bokshi, A. (2023). The information disorder in the second period of 2022, p. 22. Pristina: ADS / hibrid.info.
[39] See the article "(un)blocked Russian media" published by "hibrid.info", May 25, 2023.
[40] Focus group with media experts organized by "hibrid.info". Pristina, May 22, 2023.
[41] See the article "(un)blocked Russian media" published by "hibrid.info", May 25, 2023.

VI. MEDIA REGULATION AND SELF-REGULATION

In Kosovo there are two main mechanisms for regulating/self-regulation of media: i) the Independent Media Commission (IMC) as a regulatory mechanism for media and ii) Press Council of Kosovo (PCK) as a self-regulatory mechanism for media.

The IMC is an independent authority with the competence to regulate, manage and monitor the frequency spectrum of transmissions, as well as regulate the rights, obligations and responsibilities of individuals and legal entities that provide audio and audiovisual [42] media services, which encompasses radios and televisions in Kosovo. The main responsibilities of this regulatory mechanism include the licensing of public and private broadcasters, the imposition of sanctions on licensed subjects that violate the IMC regulations or license conditions, and reporting to the Kosovo Assembly [43].

PCK, founded as an NGO[44] in 2005 with the support of the OSCE, is a self-regulatory mechanism for written media [45]. Given that there are no longer printed newspapers since 2020, PCK's focus is on online media in the country.

One of the goals of the PCK is to protect the citizens from fake news and to protect journalists from unfounded complaints [46]. PCK is the address where interested parties and citizens can lodge complaints against media covered by this self-regulatory mechanism when there are suspicions that they have violated the PCK Code [47].

Despite this, the work of these two different mechanisms has been confronted with different problems. Regarding the IMC, the EC in 2022 has criticized that the lack of staff and adequate resources have hindered its work to exercise its competences as an independent body and has recommended that the decision making of this mechanism needs to be transparent and inclusive [48]. The monitoring of the media (television / radio) by IMC is limited because the media contents monitored by this mechanism are only in the cases of pre-election campaigns, but not other contents [49]. In this case, media experts recommend and call for IMC to monitor other contents, at least political debates on all national television channels, which are considered another

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[42] Article 3, Law No. 04/L-44 for the Independent Media Commission.
[43] Ibidem.
[44] Focus group with media experts organized by "hibrid.info". Pristina, May 22, 2023
[45] See the "About us" section on the PCK website.
[46] Ibidem.
[47] See the "Complaint Submission" section on the PCK website.
[48] European Commission. (2022). Kosovo 2022 Report, f. 94. Brussels: European Commission.
[49] Ibidem, p.34.

tool for disseminating misinformation to the Kosovo public [50]. The integrity of IMC has been questioned [51] by allegations and accusations of corruption against former high-ranking officials of this institution in 2021, who are under investigation [52] by justice institutions in Kosovo.

In Kosovo, online media are not legally regulated, and they currently are only subject to self-regulation by PCK and their membership in it is voluntary from online media [54]. Actively, these medias are not regulated by the current Law of IMC and are not within its competence. The EU has continuously recommended that the Law for IMC be changed and harmonized with the EU Directive on Audiovisual Media Services, [55] which was amended in 2018, regulating the functioning of audiovisual services [56]. The Government of Kosovo initiated in 2020 [57] a project to change the current Law on IMC with the aim of harmonization with the relevant EU Directive, but from then until now (June 2023), this draft law has not been approved yet by the Kosovo Parliament. The media experts have criticized that the process of changing the law has not been transpa-

-rent because only the IMC and the Legal Office of the Prime Minister's Office were involved in the working group, but not the media, civil society and media experts, while they were only invited to two public hearings for the draft law in 2020 and 2021 [58].

By the end of 2021, the draft law had been published on the public consultation platform, where all parties were given the opportunity to submit comments on its content [59].

The new draft law prepared by the Government, though not yet adopted and not yet in force, has been harmonized with the EU Directive, including in the scope of the IMC's competences also the regulation of video-sharing platforms, broadcasting operators and other operators who, regardless of the technology used, distribute audiovisual media service providers [60]. The table below shows how media are currently regulated by the existing IMC law and any changes that could be brought about by the proposed new legislation (if adopted as is):

[50] Focus group with media experts organized by "hibrid.info". Pristina, May 22, 2023.
[51] Ibidem.
[52] Makshana, L. (January 19, 2022). The appeal confirms the indictment against the former head of the IMC that is charged for corruption. Betimi për Drejtësi.
[53] Merlaku, A. (May 3, 2023). Several audio-recordings are heard in the corruption trial against the former head of the IMC. Betimi për Drejtësi.
[54] Focus group with media experts organized by "hibrid.info". Pristina, May 22, 2023.
[55] See EU Directive.
[56] See Article 1 of the EU Directive for the definition of audiovisual media, which includes those that disseminate online content.
[57] Focus group with media experts organized by "hibrid.info". Pristina, May 22, 2023.
[58] Ibidem.
[59] See the Draft Law on the Independent Media Commission on the public consultation platform.
[60] Article 4, Draft Law on the Independent Media Commission.

The regulation of the media in Kosovo according to the current Law of the IMC:	The regulation of media in Kosovo according to changes in the new draft Law for the IMC:
Paragraph 1, Article 3: The IMC regulates the rights, obligations and responsibilities of individuals and legal entities providing audio and audiovisual media services.	**Paragraph 2.1, Article 4:** The IMC regulates the rights, obligations and responsibilities of individuals and legal persons who provide audio media services, audiovisual services, video sharing platform services, distribution operators, as well as other operators, regardless of the technology used to distribute audiovisual media service providers.
Paragraph 2.1, Article 3: The IMC grants public and private broadcasters broadcasting licenses and renews these licenses, granting authorized subjects the right to use frequencies in the Transmission Frequency Spectrum as well as licenses for all audio-visual media services.	**Paragraph 2.2, Article 3:** The IMC grants permissions to audio service providers, audiovisual providers, video streaming platforms, distribution operators, network operators and multiplex operators.

The European Union's insistence on changing and harmonizing the Law of IMC with the EU Directive shows that it prefers for IMC to have its own regulation and licensing of online media under its competence. In its recommendation, the EU states that "the amendment process of the IMC Law, which is currently underway, should be further harmonized with the Audiovisual Media Services Directive to extend the mandate of the (IMC) to online audiovisual media." [61]. It is expected that this will be met with resistance and opposition from journalists, the media community and civil society in Kosovo on the grounds that Kosovo does not have the conditions for implementing these proposed changes due to insufficient professional capacities and the lack of IMC expertise in implementing these legal provisions [62]. The importance of strengthening the PCK is emphasized

[61] European Commission. (2022). Kosovo 2022 Report, f. 94. Brussels: European Commission.
[62] Focus group with media experts organized by "hibrid.info". Pristina, May 22, 2023..

by media and digital space experts [63], and that online media continue to remain a self-regulatory subject of the PCK [64].

PCK, as an online media self-regulatory body, is facing the challenges of financial sustainability, as observed by media experts [65] and the European Commission report on Kosovo [66], which recommends that media regulators have adequate resources in order to fulfill their mandate independently. One of the formats for securing financial sustainability for the PCK, media literacy practitioners, is to allocate a budget from the state (Government/Parliament) to develop capacities in online media monitoring, especially in terms of preventing and combating misinformation [67], but caution should be taken to avoid potential abuses in the expenditure of the budget. Meanwhile, it is worrisome that the number of online media in Kosovo that are not registered with the PCK is increasing [68].

An example of successful self-regulation of online media in the digital space, from the media community in Kosovo, is the case of self-regulation of media in Finland [69]. In Finland, the self-regulatory body of the media is the Council for Mass Media (CMM), which was established in 1968 by Finnish publishers and journalists [70].

Membership of the media in the CMM is voluntary and almost 95% of journalists working in Finnish media are members of this mechanism and have accepted the Code of Ethics of the CMM [71]. In addition to being funded by annual membership payments from its members (which in this case are media outlets), CMM can also accept funding from the Finnish Government in the form of subsidies from the Management Group of the Council (this council body oversees CMM's budget expenditure and approves its budget), and with the approval of the Board, accepts donations and legacies in support of the Council's activities [72].

Finland's role as a member of the European Union in the context of the Western Balkans and, in particular, Kosovo can be ideal given the challenges faced by the media sector in the country. This could serve as a good case for building and consolidating appropriate forms of regulation and self-regulation of media in line with the circumstances and media context in Kosovo.

[63] Ibidem.
[64] Ibidem.
[65] Ibidem.
[66] European Commission. (2022). Kosovo 2022 Report, f. 93. Brussels: European Commission.
[67] Focus group with media experts organized by "hibrid.info". Pristina, May 22, 2023.
[68] European Commission. (2022). Kosovo 2022 Report, f. 34. Brussels: European Commission.
[69] Ibidem.
[70] See the "Council for Mass Media" section on the CMM website.
[71] OECD iLibrary. (2021). 4. Media freedoms and digital rights in Finland.
[72] Article 23, Basic Agreement of the CMM. For more details regarding the function and activity of this media self-regulatory mechanism in Finland, see the CMM website here: https://jsn.fi/en/.

CONCLUSION

Monitoring of the informational disorder in Kosovo for the period from January to June 2023 has evidenced the continuity of the previous six-month period's trend that topics related to developments in Kosovo are most often used for creating and disseminating misinformation by various publishers and online media.

The issue of Kosovo's north, which has been reintroduced in recent months, is the main political topic mostly addressed by misinformation publications during this six-month period. Most of the misinformation publications about the north have been assessed as "disinformation" and media in the Serbian language have created and disseminated the most disinformation related to developments in the north of Kosovo.

Such publications based on unsubstantiated facts are part of the disinformation narratives primarily promulgated by Serbian-language media close to the power in Serbia regarding political and security issues in Kosovo related to the north of Kosovo, the Serbian community in Kosovo, false claims of threat to Serbs by the state of Kosovo, etc. All media publications in the Serbian language related to events in Kosovo have been focused in the political and security area. On the other hand, publishers in the Albanian language have also published a considerable amount of disinformation, however, it can be noticed that they have disseminated more disinformation about social issues rather than political ones.

In the social area, misinformation has been ranked second after politics and all of it has been created and disseminated by various media and publishers in the Albanian language. Misinformation in the social area has been assessed under these two categories of misinformation: "clickbait" and "scam". This testifies to the tendency of publishers in Albanian language, mainly from Kosovo, to disseminate content in order to increase their online audience and as a result of their lack of professionalism. It has also been found to support this finding that the overwhelming majority of the distortions that have addressed social issues have been published from various pages and profiles on social media, as well as from suspicious portals. Traditionally, publishers sharing such misleading articles do not necessarily have the tendency or intention to misinform or deceive, but

rather do it mainly for the opportunity to gain financial benefits through clicks. Clickbait by way of misinforming has dominated the most during this period and besides the social area, publishers in the Albanian language have been heavily served with misinforming articles for the black chronicle that have been rated as mostly "clickbait".

The report also covers other related issues of misinformation, such as misinformation types, types of publishers, including social media, which have largely been used to disseminated various distortions of information about events in Kosovo.

It is noted in the report that the previously identified challenges, such as deficiencies in Kosovo's legal framework for media regulation/self-regulation, have yet to be addressed by Kosovo's institutions, despite criticisms from international organizations. Furthermore, mechanisms dealing with media are faced with a lack of capacity (professional and financial) which impedes regular and systematic monitoring of media operating in the online space. Media, particularly online media, are confronted with a lack of professional resources and knowledge for fact-checking and identifying misinformative content and disinformation narratives, which in itself challenges the effective prevention and combatting of informational disorder in the country.

To approve the new Law on the Independent Media Commission, taking into account the repeated recommendations of the European Commission over the years. Nevertheless, until the Law is approved by the Kosovo Assembly, transparency in the process should be ensured. Media experts and civil society organizations should be directly involved in the legislative review of the law in order to participate and contribute directly to its content. Media requirements for regulation or self-regulation should be taken into account during the finalization of the law before it is approved.

Media ownership, transparency and funding should be regulated either by the new Law of the Independent Media Commission or by a new law to avert the legal vacuum that exists in this area, but more importantly to avoid any potential misuse and this would ultimately prevent misinformation and disinformation from journalists and media.

The Independent Media Commission should increase its professional capacity to monitor daily political and security debates on Kosovo's national television channels, which may contain inaccurate information from the participants of these debates (analysts, publicists, political event commentators, etc.). Civil society and fact-checking platforms in Kosovo should monitor TV debates in Kosovo to prevent hate speech and misinformation. Since TV debates are one of the major sources of information from which audiences are informed, they consequently have a significant impact on the public.

An informative campaign should be conducted involving regulatory and self-regulatory institutions of the media, media, and civil society to educate the population on distinguishing between true news and misinforming, disinforming, and fake news content so that parties and a wider audience may understand the role of these mechanisms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is urgently required from government institutions, namely the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, and its supporting mechanisms to engage in the inclusion of media and digital literacy in primary and secondary schools in Kosovo considering that misinformation is already a reality which will not disappear soon.

For the fact-checking platform in Kosovo to be more active in identifying misinformation and false content from various media and publishers in Kosovo in order to influence greater reader and online space user awareness of the risks of disinformation and fake news.

Kosovo media should establish obligatory criteria for journalists to attend intensive and ongoing training on methods and techniques for identifying and detecting misinformation, disinformation, and fake news in order to develop capacities and skills in verifying information.

METHODOLOGY

For the drafting of this report, both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used through a combined methodological approach.

In the quantitative part, the monthly monitoring reports of the platform "hibrid.info" about misinformation, published during the six-month period of January-June 2023, are included. These monthly reports have covered regular daily fact-checking from "hibrid.info".

While the qualitative data were collected from intensive discussions with a focus group of experienced media experts, editors and journalists that was organized in May 2023. This was preceded by a research work through the analysis, review and consultation of the legal framework in Kosovo for the media, as well as the reports of local and international organizations on the media in Kosovo and the region. As such, media archives in Kosovo have also served as another important source for this monitoring and research report.

The foundation of this report was constructed from the findings of monthly monitoring reports and focus groups, which served as sources for the extraction of primary data. Meanwhile, the findings from research of various materials have been utilized as secondary data to reinforce the analysis of primary sources.

The report has provided practical and concrete explanations of these technical-professional notions used in the report, especially as regards the categories of misinformation and types of publishers of misinformation, in order to avoid misinterpretations. To accomplish this, a section entitled "Glossary" has been included.

Glossary

CLICKBAIT

"Clickbait" are those texts whose title has no basis in the content of the following text. Such texts and articles aim to attract the attention of the reader or even the consumer (click) with a sensational title promising content that does not actually exist .

PROFESSIONAL MISTAKE

The "Professional mistake" rating is given to media reports in which the media editors made a mistake by publishing incorrect information or broadcasting unverified news from another source, without the clear intention of misinforming the public.

ONE-SIDED REPORTING

Assessment as "One-sided reporting" is given to that media report which is observed to favor facts, attitudes and conclusions that match a particular narrative, often not respecting the rule of contact with the other side when it comes to claims that are harmful for one's reputation.

CONSPIRACY THEORY

Information that disseminates a false or unverifiable description of a phenomenon, event or a person, presenting it as part or the result of a secret plan ("conspiracy"), is rated as "Conspiracy theory". Their characteristic is to present a series of claims as facts without providing any reliable evidence.

PSEUDOSCIENCE

Information that attempts to present certain opinions, attitudes, values or findings obtained by a non-scientific method and present them as scientific discoveries or facts is rated as "Pseudoscience". Such reports misrepresent or manipulate existing scientific research, or refer to research that is contrary to science.

MANIPULATION OF FACTS

The assessment as "Manipulation of facts" is given to those media reports that use facts known to be correct, but interpret them in a distorted way. These reports typically use inaccurate information to draw inaccurate conclusions or claims, misdirecting consumers' conclusions of media content.

DISINFORMATION

The assessment as "Misinformation" is taken by that media report which contains a "mix" of incorrect sources or even half-true content. Also, this assessment will address reports that have incorrect attributes or titles that do not reflect the text in terms of accuracy of information.

SPIN

The "Spin" assessment is given to a media report with which the author tries to divert the public's attention from some content or other facts that are being reported in the media at that time. Characteristic of such reports in m to divert attention, and which is unfavorable for some actors, mainly political.

FAKE NEWS

The assessment "Fake news" is given to those media reports that are entirely the product of a medium that contains fabricated claims or information. So, fake news can be defined as being created and distributed with the intent to misinform the public, to present a claim that is false as a fact.

UNVERIFIED CONTENT

The assessment "Unverified" is given to those media reports that do not provide sufficient information to confirm the claims made in the report, and which could not confirm the same due to the lack or non-possession of reliable sources.

SATIRE

The "Satire" assessment includes content that uses preconceived news that uses satire to show reality. This is also a way of reporting which is not problematic, if the media manages to argue that it is a matter of satirical content.

REAL MEDIA

Real media are those whose country of origin is known, that are registered as legal entities, such as businesses or NGOs, that have data about and about their activity such as ownership, management, imprint, address, staff and others.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media includes accounts, profiles, fun pages, official pages on Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, etc.

DUBIOUS PORTALS

Dubioul portals are those for which data on ownership, management, imprint, address, staff and others are missing, or have them only partially.

PUBLICATIONS IN THE ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

Publications in the Albanian language include contents published by: i) real media, ii) various pages and profiles in social media and iii) dubious portals.

PUBLICATIONS IN THE SERBIAN LANGUAGE

Serbian-language publications include content published by real Serbian-language media.

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