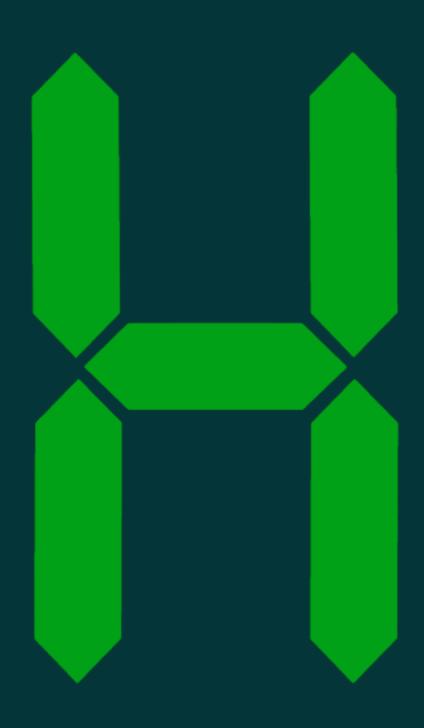
Monthly report on information disorder September 2023

Action for Democratic Society hibrid.info



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Evaluation categories of the disinformation

The topics used to create and disseminate disinformation content

Types of domains

Types of publishers

Classification of media publications in the Albanian and Serbian language Most outspoken personalities and institutions

Content

Introduction

This summary and descriptive report, the first of its kind in Kosovo so far, offers an overview of the state of information (disinformation) throughout the month of September 2023, based on the data provided by the fact-checking platform – hibrid.info. This report is structured in a monitoring format and presents the situation over a one-month period, whereas, this is the 15th consecutive monthly report published so far.

This report is designed by the fact-checking platform hibrid.info, part of the Kosovar NGO "Action for Democratic Society" (ADS) and is supported by the American Foundation "National Endowment for Democracy" (NED) under the project "Promotion of Objective Journalism and Fighting Disinformation".

In this monitoring report is provided an overview of the form of media information on events in and around Kosovo. In the course of this report, several figures (graphics) deriving from the hibrid.info database is presented, divided under several rating categories that are part of the fact-checking methodology of this platform.

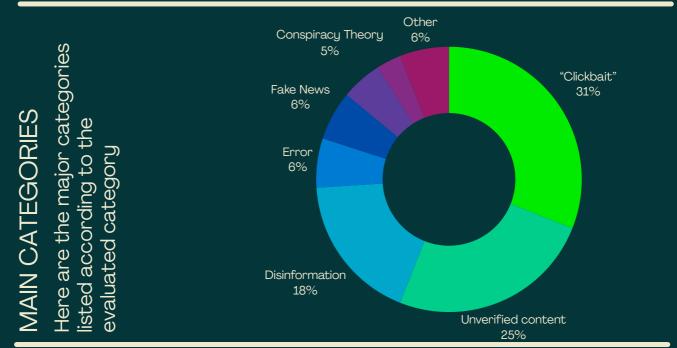
The report addresses 8 comparative categories of data, aiming to provide a more objective clarification of the state of information and to explain the trends of disinformation for this monitoring period.

The monitoring categories are:

- Rating of disinformation articles
- The topics used to create and disseminate disinformation content
- Areas upon which disinformation articles are created and disseminated
- Institutions and persons tackled by the disinformation articles
- Types of media that have created and disseminated disinformation content
- Categorization of media in Albanian and Serbian language that have created and disseminated misleading conten
- Types of publishers in social media that have created and disseminated misleading content

The content analyzed by the researchers of hibrid.info and that has served for the preparation of this report is primarily that published in Albanian and Serbian languages.

Evaluation categories of the disinformation



Similar to the previous months of July and August 2023, during this month (September 2023), articles with misinformation content rated as "clickbait" have dominated, accounting for 31%. They are followed by unverified content in second place with 25% and disinformation in third place with 18%.

During July and August 2023, misinformation publications in the "clickbait" category were also in the first place (29% in July 2023 and 33% in August 2023). However, the key difference lies in disinformation, which, in the previous monitoring months, was ranked second (25% during July and August 2023), while in the course of this monitoring month dropped to third place, suffering a decrease of 7% compared to the previous months (or 18% total disinformation). Meanwhile, another significant finding is misinformation rated as unverified content, which ranked second this month with 25% and had the largest increase compared to July and August 2023, during which months the percentage was almost negligible (6% in July 2023 and 3% in August 2023).

This is one of the main findings of this monthly monitoring report because the focus of various media and publishers was on reporting on political and security issues during September 2023 and a considerable proportion of them has been rated as unverified content. Furthermore, among the main reasons that unverified content has prevailed over disinformation is that a considerable percentage of misinformation from the security domain, related to the terrorist attack on the Kosovo Police in Banjskë of Zveçan, on 24 September 2023, has been rated as unverified content.

Misinformation publications in this rated category were lastly ranked second in November 2022, leaving behind disinformation, which almost always held the first or second position according to the measurements of the "hibrid.info" platform.



31% of misinformation articles have been rated as "clickbait".

Analysis of rating types

01. "Clickbait"

Almost all content rated as "clickbait" has been published by mainstream media in the Albanian language. The overwhelming majority of them have been published in the domain of black chronicle and social issues. Major articles in black chronicle that received rating of "clickbait" covered various topics such as death, murder and accidents. The headlines of these articles do not disclose the location of the event, implying that the incident could have occurred in Kosovo. Albania or elsewhere where Albanian speaking audience exist to drive clicks, leaving room for misinformation. Meanwhile, misinformation in the social issues domain rated as "clickbait" revolved around the topic of rising food product prices, unrelated to Kosovo, but this was not made known in their headlines.

03. Disinformation

Disinformation has been published by pages on social media (Facebook) and dubious portals in the Albanian language, as well as by media in the Serbian language. A significant percentage of them have been published in the security domain, while the rest are related to politics, sports and curiosities. All disinformation published by publishers on social media was in the Albanian language, primarily from the security domain related to the terrorist attack in Banjskë of Zveçan and the war in Ukraine. Meanwhile, misleading articles from mainstream media were published in the Serbian language regarding the terrorist attack against the Kosovo Police in Banjskë. They claim that the EULEX mission was not involved in the operations of the Kosovo Police in the north of Kosovo during that day, that there were paid killers in the Kosovo Police, that the video showing former-Vice President of the "Serbian List," Milan Radojçiq was not from that day and an audio recording claiming to represent the conversation between Kosovo Police members and one of the wounded Serbian attackers.

O2. Unverified Content

Unverified content has been published by mainstream media and social media publishers and almost all of them have been published in the Albanian language, covering the domains of security, sports, and black chronicle. In this category, articles in the security domain dominated, concerning the developments in the north of Kosovo addressing the terrorist attack on the Kosovo Police in Banjskë of Zveçan, during September 2023. For this event, publishers published unverified photos claiming to depict the attackers killed or members of the Kosovo Police or of its special unit. Meanwhile, misinformation in the sports domain included speculation about football players and the Kosovo National Football team, while those from black chronicle were related to floods in Libya and the earthquake in Morocco.

04. Error

All misinformation content rated as an error has been published by mainstream media in the Albanian language in the domain of sports, black chronicle and social issues. In the sports domain, the media incorrectly reported the sale price of the jersey of the Albanian National Football player Nedim Bajrami and it was incorrectly reported that Albania won the match against the Czech Republic held in Prague in the qualifiers for 2024 European Championship. the Regarding social and black chronicle topics, the media incorrectly reported that a Trafiku Urban bus in Prishtina was fined and the case of a girl stabbed in Fushë Kosovë was mistakenly reported to have occurred in Obilia.

05. Fake News

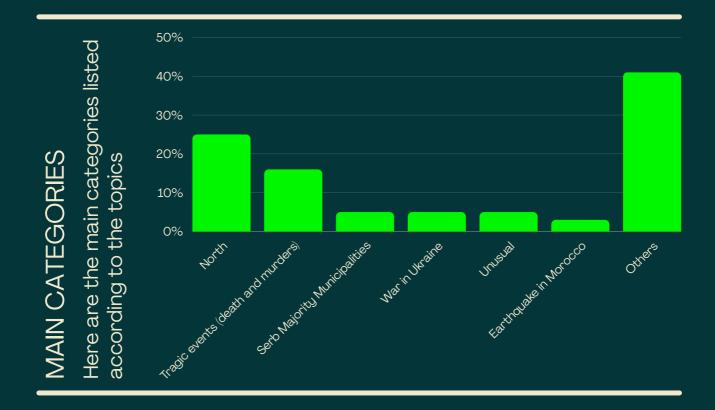
Fake news has been published by publishers on social media, primarily by Albanian language pages on Facebook. In these misinformation, false content related to the security domain was published, claiming that Kosovo would be supplied with Turkish military equipment "Boran 105mm," while in the sports domain, it was falsely claimed that Albanian footballer in the Swiss National Team, Granit Xhaka, allegedly said he could not score against Kosovo in the match with Switzerland. In the course of fake news, an edited image of the supposedly barren land, falsely presented as a photo taken by the Indian mission to the moon, was also published.

06. Conspiracy Theories

Conspiracy theories were published by mainstream media and publishers on social media in the Albanian and Serbian languages. Articles with conspiratorial content from media in the Serbian language were published in the domain of politics, including the claim by the Head of the Office for Kosovo in the Serbian government, Petar Petkovia, that the arrest of Serbs suspected of various crimes is intended of expulsion of Serbs from Kosovo. Misinformation articles from mainstream media in the Albanian language with conspiratorial elements are linked to one of the episodes of "The Simpsons" show as a warning of a war in Kosovo during the fall. Meanwhile, publishers on social media disseminated conspiratorial predictions by conspiracy theorist Alfred Cako, claiming that a major war is expected to occur in September 2023 and that during this time snake poison will be dropped from planes.

Other articles with misinformation content have been categorized as "Manipulation of Facts," "Conspiracy Theories," and through the combination of categories "Conspiracy Theories/Disinformation".

The topics used to create and disseminate disinformation content



Based on the monitoring of misinformation content, various media and publishers have mostly published misinformation articles about the north of Kosovo, accounting for 25% during September 2023. The reason of actualization of the northern topic derives as a consequence of developments in the north of Kosovo after the terrorist attack against the Kosovo Police in the village of Banjskë of Zveçan, where a member of the Kosovo Police and three Serbian attackers were killed. Almost all misinformation publications related to the terrorist attack in Banjskë were from the security domain, primarily published by publishers on social media (Facebook) from Albanian language pages rated as unverified and disinformation content. On the other hand, misinformation contents in the Serbian language on this topic were published by mainstream media outlets and rated as disinformation.

Meanwhile, misinformation articles coded as "tragic cases" covering media reports on various deaths and murders rank second at 16%. It is worth mentioning that this ranks among the main topics in recent months (July, August and September 2023) in the mainstream media in the Albanian language, which publish articles from black chronicle on different tragic cases without clarifying the event's location in the headlines. Furthermore, this is done out with the intention of increasing clicks on articles that deal with black chronicle, implying that the event could have occurred in Kosovo, Albania or elsewhere where there is an Albanian speaking audience to urge clicks.

In the course of this month (September 2023), there was misinformation content about Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo (5%). They were published by media in Serbian language regarding several incidents interpreted as a tendency for the expulsion of Serbs. Also, dubious portals and publishers on social media in the Albanian language created and disseminated misinformation about some unusual events, including the edited image of barren land, the alleged drop of snake poison from the planes and the appearance of an unusual creature in Berat.



59% of the main topics are related to developments in the north, tragic cases in various circumstances, Serb-majority municipalities, the war in Ukraine, unusual events and the earthquake in Morocco.

Fact-checking analysis according to topics

In the following are summarized analyses of four main topics (themes) addressed by various media and publishers, based on the measurements from the hibrid.info platform through fact-checking methodology.

0<u>1</u>. North

Almost all misinformation content regarding developments in the north has been published in the domain of security and has dealt with the terrorist attack in Banjskë of Zveçan and the subsequent events after the assault. They were primarily rated as unverified content disinformation, published in and the mainstream media and pages on social media in Albanian and Serbian languages. Topics of misinformation content in the Albanian language were linked to various photos and videos, claiming to depict members of a special unit of the Kosovo Police, Serbian attackers killed, members of the Kosovo Police and images from the burial of the killed Serbian attackers. On the other hand, disinformation articles in the Serbian language were published by mainstream media with false allegations by Serbian officials about EULEX's non-involvement in the operations of the Kosovo Police, disinformation that there were paid killers within the Kosovo Police and false claims that the video material published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kosovo within the courtyard of the Monastery in Banjskë, which shows former Vice President of the "Serbian List," Milan Radojçiq, did not belong to the day of the attack (Radojciq resigned from this position a few days after the terrorist attack in Banjskë).

02. Tragic Cases

overwhelming The majority of misinformation articles on tragic cases have been published in the domain of black chronicle and are categorized as "clickbait," published by mainstream media in the Albanian language. Articles under this misinformation topic have covered death and murder in various circumstances and where their location is not specified in the headlines, with intention of encouraging clicks from readers.

04. War in Ukraine

Disinformation related to the war in Ukraine has been published in mainstream media and various Facebook pages in the Albanian language. They have been rated as disinformation and unverified content propagated in the domain of security and politics. They are linked to disinformation that the recruitment of Ukrainians into the army is occurring forcibly and unverified content that a poster titled "Glory to Urine" has appeared in New York instead of "Glory to Ukraine".

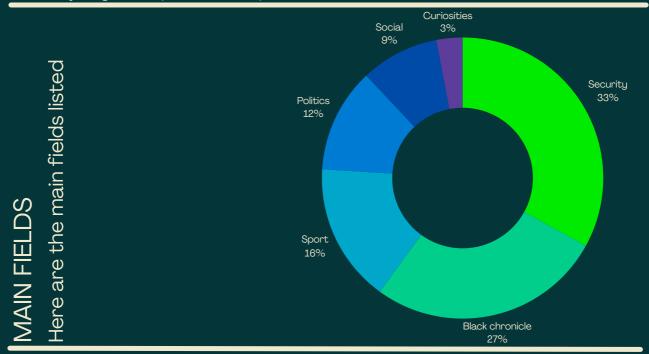
03.

Serb-Majority Municipalities

Misinformation content on this topic has been predominantly published in the domain of politics and security, being rated as disinformation, conspiracy theories and unverified content. Misinformation reports on Serb-majority municipalities have been published by media in Serbian language, propagating disinformation that Prime Minister of Kosovo Albin Kurti has targeted Serbian children, fueling conspiracy theories suggesting that the arrest of Serbs suspected of war crimes in Kosovo is a deliberate effort to expel them out of Kosovo as well as unverified content asserting that the inscription "UÇK" in a school in Kllokot signifies hatred towards Serbs.

Types of domains

Based on the monitoring data for September 2023, the security domain has significantly dominated over all other topics and fields during this month, in the misinformation reports from publishers (media, dubious portals, and publishers on social media) in Albanian and Serbian languages. This is the first time since December 2022 that the security domain has taken the first place with 33% concerning misinformation and particularly in connection with developments in the north of the country. In this regard, the terrorist attack in the north of Kosovo on 24 September 2023, has influenced the misinformation in the security domain and especially on this topic, to be the focus of the media and publishers monitored by "hibrid.info." Other topics covered in terms of security include misinformation content about the arming of the KSF, a warning of a war in Kosovo during the fall, developments in Serb majority municipalities and speculations about the war in Ukraine.



The prevalence of misleading articles in the security domain is one of the key findings of this report compared to previous monitoring months. For example, in August 2023, the political domain had significantly dominated in the first place, marking a drastic decline of 25% this month, ranking fourth in terms of the number of publications (from 37% in August 2023 to 12% in September 2023). On the other hand, the security domain has seen a considerable increase of 24% this month compared to the previous month (from 9% in August 2023 to 33% in September 2023), ranking first as a domain of misinformation. Security is followed by the black chronicle with 27%, which has had a slight increase of 3% compared to the previous month (August 2023). The security and black chronicle domains constitute more than half of the misinformation content for this month (around 60%), even though these two domains are not inter-related. A considerable percentage of misleading articles from the security domain have been rated as unverified content and disinformation, while all misleading content from the black chronicle is rated as "clickbait."

Another characteristic of this month is a significant decrease of 13% in misleading publications on social issues (from 22% in August 2023 to 9% in September 2023). Meanwhile, there is a significant increase in articles in the sports domain (16%), as a consequence of misleading content related to the Kosovo and Albanian national teams in football for the qualifying matches, for the 2024 European Championship.

All misinformation content from the security domain is published by pages on social media (Facebook) in Albanian language with 19% and in the mainstream media with 14% (in Albanian and Serbian). Regarding the rated categories of misinformation, 14% of them are rated as disinformation, 9% unverified content and 3% manipulation of facts. Disinformation is primarily published by media in the Serbian language and pages on social media in Albanian language, related to the terrorist attack against the Kosovo Police in Banjskë of Zveçan. While, unverified content (mostly photos) is published by pages on Facebook in Albanian language, claiming to depict events in Banjskë.

Misleading articles under the topic of black chronicle have received the most "clickbait" ratings (19%), followed by unverified content (6%) and errors (2%). Almost all "clickbait" content is published by media in Albanian language related to death and murder in various circumstances.

Whereas, misinformation content in the sports domain is published by media and pages on social media in Albanian language, which are rated as unverified content (6%), "clickbait" (3%) and errors (3%). Also, publications in the political domain are primarily published by media in the Serbian language and pages on social media in Albanian language, rated as unverified content (3%), "clickbait" (3%) and conspiracy theories (2%).



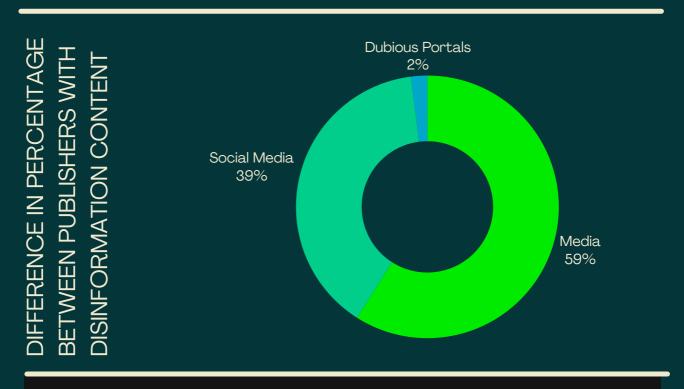
97% of the misinformation content is related to security, the black chronicle, sports, politics, and social issues.

Types of publishers

Similar to the previous month (August 2023), also during September 2023, the largest number of misleading articles were published by mainstream media, accounting for 59%. There is even an 8% increase compared to the previous month (from 51% in August 2023 to 59% in September 2023). This can be explained by the fact that all rated misinformation as "clickbait" and error, as well as a considerable number of disinformation and unverified content, were published in mainstream media (in Albanian and Serbian languages).

On the other hand, 39% of articles for this month were published and disseminated by publishers on social media in Albanian language, where unverified content, disinformation and fake news have dominated. Whereas, only 2% were published by dubious portals.

As it could be seen, compared to August 2023, misinformation publications in mainstream media during September 2023 have increased, those on social media are almost the same, while there is a 7% decrease in dubious portals.

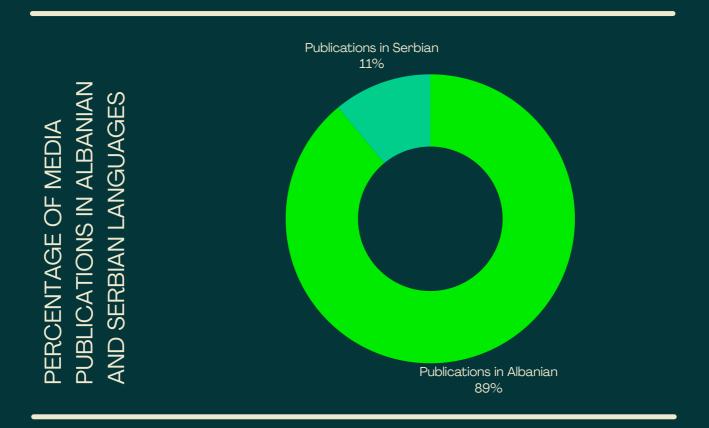




98% of articles with misinformation content were published by media outlets (59%) and publishers in social media (39%).

Classification of publications in the Albanian and Serbian language

This measurement reveals the language in which the scrutinized disinformation articles have been published over the course of one month, categorizing the media into Albanian, Serbian and other languages concerning their coverage reports of the developments in and around Kosovo.



During this month as well, various publishers in Albanian language have published the majority of misleading content, accounting for 89%. This is understandable given that the monitoring sample from the "hibrid.info" platform focuses more on content published in Albanian by mainstream media, social media publishers and dubious portals, while in the Serbian language, only reports from mainstream media in Serbian regarding developments in and around Kosovo are mainly monitored.

Based on monitoring data, 48% of misinformation articles in Albanian were published in mainstream media, 39% by social media publishers and 2% on dubious portals. Meanwhile, all misinformation in Serbian was published in mainstream media (11%) related to events in the north of Kosovo, addressing the terrorist attack in Banjskë of Zveçan.

Analysis of articles in this category

In this section of the report, disinformation publications published by media outlets in Albanian, Serbian and other languages are analyzed. The following narrative provides an overview of their interrelations across categorizations, domains, and addressed topics.

01. Publications in Albanian language

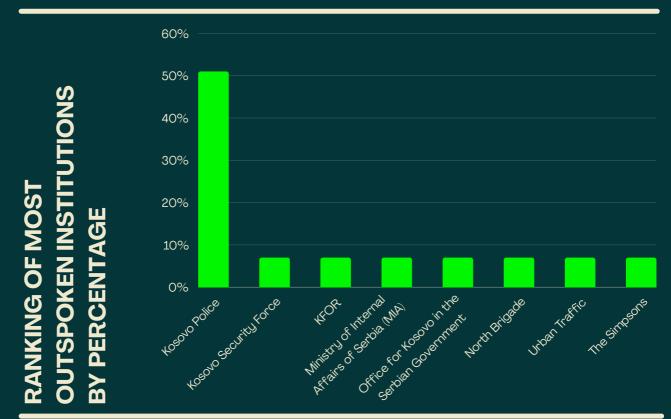
Contents rated as "Clickbait" continues to dominate this month in publications by media in Albanian language because all content from the black chronicle and a relatively small percentage from politics, sports and social issues fall into this category. "Clickbait" is followed by unverified content and disinformation, primarily in the security domain related developments in the north in to connection with the terrorist attack against the Kosovo Police in Banjskë of Zveçan. Monitoring data show that over half of the misleading content in Albanian language belongs to the security and black chronicle domains. While in the security domain have dominated topics related to developments in the north, topics from the black chronicle have dealt with tragic cases (suspected deaths and murders).

02. Publications in Serbian language

All misleading content in Serbian has been published by mainstream media addressing security and political topics related to events in Kosovo during September 2023. Publications of media in Serbian language have been rated as disinformation, unverified content and conspiracy theories. The disinformation disseminated by these media raised untrue allegations of Serbian officials regarding the terrorist attack in Banjskë, such as the video material published by Kosovo institutions, in which Milan Radojçiq is seen, was not from the day of the attack, that EULEX was not allowed to participate in the operations of the Kosovo Police, and there were paid killers within the ranks of the latter. Publication in the Serbian, media in also contain conspiratorial interpretations suggesting that the arrest of Serbs suspected of war crimes in Kosovo is a deliberate effort to expel them out of Kosovo as well as unverified content asserting that the inscription "UCK" in a school in Kllokot signifies hatred towards Serbs.

Most outspoken personalities and institutions

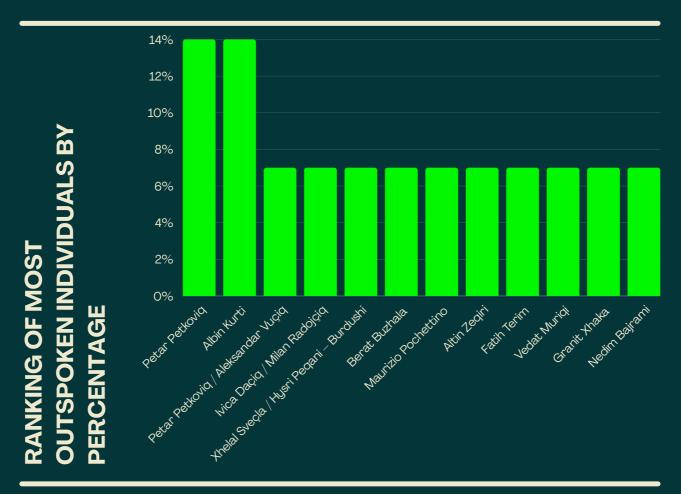
This measurement analyzes data to determine which institutions and personalities (political public figures) have been most outspoken through the monitoring of articles with disinformation content.



The most mentioned institution during this month is the Kosovo Police, which returns to the top of the list of the most mentioned institutions by various media and publishers with 51%. The police dominated this month due to the security situation in the north of Kosovo and especially during and after the terrorist attack in Banjskë of Zveçan, at the end of September 2023.

The Kosovo Police, as a security institution, was mentioned in disinformation published by media in Serbian language regarding the terrorist attack in Banjskë, claiming that there were paid killers within the ranks of the Kosovo Police, that the EULEX mission was not allowed to participate in the operation led by the Police, that Serbian children were targeted, etc. Additionally, the police were mentioned in disinformation and unverified content disseminated by pages in the Albanian language on social media (Facebook) regarding the terrorist attack in Banjskë. Other mentioned institutions or organizations are the Kosovo Security Force, Urban Traffic, KFOR, the Office for Kosovo in the Serbian Government, the Serbian organization "North Brigade" (declared a terrorist organization by the Government of Kosovo in June 2023), the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Serbia, and "The Simpsons" show.

Apart from the Kosovo Police, all other mentioned institutions in the above table were mentioned once in the misinformation content published by various publishers during September 2023.



Regarding the most mentioned personalities in the misinformation published this month, the Director of the Office for Kosovo in the Serbian Government, Petar Petkoviq, in context with other personalities, is the most mentioned figure. The reason Petkoviq is the most mentioned during September 2023 is related to his frequent statements spreading disinformation about the terrorist attack in Banjskë of Zveçan. Media in Serbian language rumored Petkoviq's disinformation claims regarding the terrorist attack in Banjskë, stating that EULEX was not involved and spreading another disinformation that there were paid killers within the ranks of the Kosovo Police.

Although he topped monthly reports throughout this year (January-August 2023) as well as monitoring reports from last year (July-December 2022), the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, ranks second among the most mentioned personalities in the misinformation published during September 2023. He was mentioned in disinformation disseminated by media in Serbian language claiming that after the terrorist attack in Banjskë, Kurti targeted Serbian children. Also, Prime Minister Kurti was mentioned by media in Albanian language in their claims that he was indirectly threatened with life (though not explicitly) by the "North Brigade" organization in the north, which was declared a terrorist organization by the Government of Kosovo.

Other mentioned personalities include Albanian footballers Altin Zeqiri, Vedat Muriqi, Nedim Bajrami, Granit Xhaka and football coaches Fatih Terim and Maurizio Pochettino, as well as other public personalities.

Methodology

For the preparation of this monitoring report, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used.

With regard to quantitative methods, a database was initially created from ADS/hibrid.info in order to break down and analyze in details the misinformation trends. Through this database, regularly maintained and updated daily by the ADS/hibrid.info staff, articles with disinformation content are monitored.

This means that all articles published on the hibrid.info platform are placed in the database, and the latter serves as the main source for preparing the monitoring report. Furthermore, the methodology used to analyze the presented data in the monitoring report enables data filtering into daily, weekly, and monthly basis, mainly in quantitative form, to better understand the phenomenon of disinformation of those analyzed articles for this one month period of time according to various categories and ratings.

Parallel to this, another important source for this report is the ADS/hibrid.info methodology (published on the hibrid.info website) for combating informational disorder. This methodology, which is first and foremost based on qualitative methods, has been developed by the professional staff of ADS/hibrid.info and is in line with the highest international standards for fact-checking, following the guidelines of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), respectively. ADS/hibrid.info is a full member of this international mechanism – IFCN.

This monitoring report covers the period from 1 - 30 of September 2023.

This summary monitoring report provides a snapshot of the one month state of play of information (misinformation) during September 2023, from the data from the fact-checking platform – hibrid.info.

In the course of September 2023, diverse media outlets and publishers generated and disseminated mostly "clickbait" articles, constituting 31%, followed by unverified content at 25% and disinformation at 18%. The preponderance of "clickbait" articles were published by media in Albanian language, predominantly within the domain of black chronicle (19%). Unverified content was published by pages on social media (16%) and mainstream media (9%), spanning in the domains of security, sports, black chronicle and politics. . Nearly all instances of disinformation unfolded within the security domain, disseminated by social media pages (9%) in the Albanian language and mainstream media in the Serbian language (8%). All misinformation reports classified as error were disseminated by media in the Albanian language, centering around topics within the domain of sports, black chronicle and social issues. Meanwhile, conspiracy theories were published by mainstream media in the Serbian language and pages in the Albanian language on social media (Facebook).

Regarding topics, the terrorist attack against the Kosovo Police in Banjskë turned the north part of Kosovo into the main topic of misinformation during September 2023, accounting for 25%. Nearly all misinformation publications related to the terrorist attack in Banjskë were from the security domain, primarily published by pages on social media (Facebook) in the Albanian language, rated as unverified content and disinformation. Whereas, the misinformation content in the Serbian language on this topic was published in mainstream media and rated as disinformation. Misinformation articles on death and murders topics coded as "tragic cases" ranked as the second most covered topic with 16%, for which the location of events remains unknown from the headlines. These misleading articles were published by media in the Albanian language. Security and black chronicle are two domains that are not interconnected however together constitute more than half of misinformation content (about 60%) for September 2023. The majority of content from the security domain was rated as disinformation and unverified content, published by pages on social media (Facebook) in the Albanian language and mainstream media in the Serbian language. Meanwhile, misinformation content from the black chronicle domain, ranked second at 27%, was primarily published by media in the Albanian language and most of them were rated as "clickbait." Other fields of misinformation include sports (16%) and politics (12%).

Even this month (September 2023), misinformation publications in mainstream media lead with 59%, followed by social media (Facebook) with 39% and dubious portals with 2%. Based on monitoring during September, 89% of misinformation content was published by media and pages on social media (Facebook) in the Albanian language, while 11% were in the media in Serbian language. While half of the misinformation content published in the Albanian language is in the security and black chronicle domains, all misinformation content in the Serbian language is related to the domain of security and politics. Media and publishers in the Albanian language published the most "clickbait" articles during this month at 31% for tragic cases, while unverified content ranked second at 23%, followed by disinformation in third place at 11%. Meanwhile, misinformation content in the Serbian language was rated as disinformation (8%), followed by unverified content (2%) and conspiracy theories (2%) in relation to the terrorist attack in Banjskë in September 2023.

The most mentioned institution is the Kosovo Police (KP) by media and publishers in the Albanian and Serbian languages regarding the terrorist attack in Banjskë. Whereas, with regard to personalities, the Director of the Office for Kosovo in the Serbian Government, Petar Petkoviq, is the most mentioned person in context with other personalities and related to the terrorist attack in Banjskë. Compared to previous monitoring months, during September 2023, the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, ranks second in the misinformation reports of various media and publishers monitored by the platform "hibrid.info". HIBRID.INFO