

February 2024

**Monthly report on
information
disorder
January 2024**

**Action for
Democratic Society
hibrid.info**



Monthly report on information disorder January 2024

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Introduction

This summary and descriptive report, offers an overview of the state of information (misinformation) throughout the month of January 2023, based on the data provided by the fact-checking platform – hibrid.info. The format of this report is the first and only of its kind. It is a monitoring report and presents the situation over a one-month period of time and this is nineteenth 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:

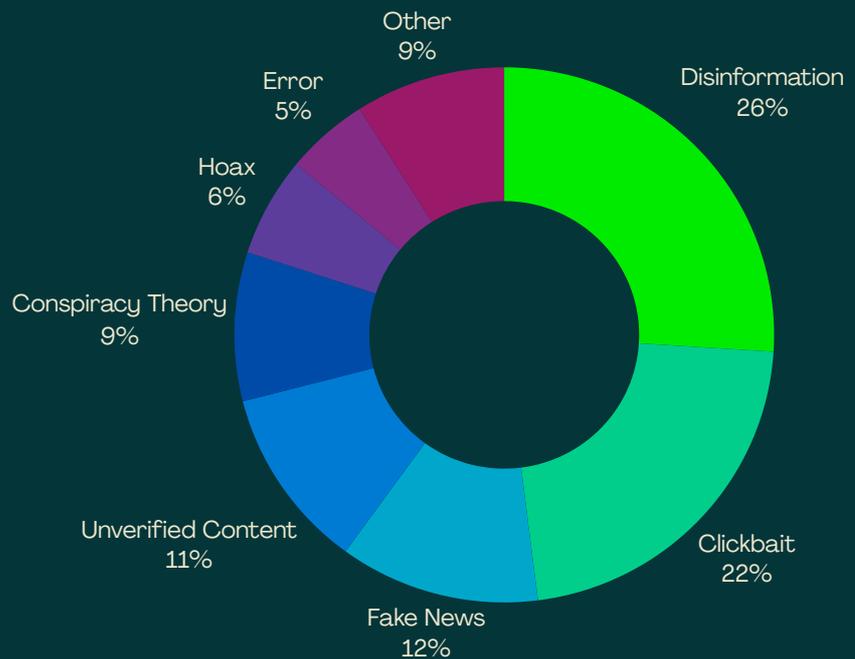
- Rating of disinformation articles
- The topics used to create and disseminate disinformation content
- Areas upon which disinformation articles are created and disseminated
- Institutions and persons tackled by the disinformation articles
- Types of media that have created and disseminated disinformation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

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

MAIN CATEGORIES

Here are the major categories listed according to the evaluated category



Based on the monitoring of 65 misinformation contents processed during January 2024, disinformation has dominated in terms of trends in misinformation content published by various media and publishers.

Whereas, during December of the previous year (2023), fake news had prevailed due to its dissemination on the social media platform TikTok regarding the arming of the KSF, in the month of January 2024, disinformation ranks first as a category. Disinformation around various social issues, including those related to the mass exodus of the population following visa liberalization, has led this category to top the list with 26%.

Disinformation is followed by "clickbait" articles, the most common form of misinformation from informative portals (media). Clickbait articles have almost the same percentage as compared to December of the previous year (2023), although in this month, they rank as the second category, unlike the previous month when they were ranked third.

Meanwhile, in the third place, fake news holds a position with 12%, a result of the reduction in fake content about the arming of the KSF published on the social media platform TikTok, which influenced this category to be first in the ranking in December of the previous year.



26% of misinformation articles processed have been rated as "disinformation".

1.1 Analysis of rating types

01. Disinformation

A considerable proportion of disinformation has been published in the domains of social issues and security. The disinformation has been published through social media (14%), mainstream media (9%) and dubious portals (3%). Contents rated as disinformation and published in mainstream media, dubious portals and social media in the Albanian language were addressing mainly on various social, political and security related topics, including claims about jobs in Switzerland, the prohibition of the dinar, the arming of the KSF and others. Meanwhile, content published in Serbian language mainstream media falsely addressed the topic of mass population exodus from Kosovo after visa liberalization, falsely misinforming that a large number of people has already left and an exodus has begun in Kosovo.

03. Fake News

These false content pieces were published by pages and accounts on social media and dubious portals in Albanian language, in the domain of security and social issues. False claims were published about the distribution of financial resources by the government, false claims related to employment in Switzerland, a meeting between Prime Minister Kurti and Turkish President Erdogan and about war in Kosovo.

05. Conspiracy Theories

The contents addressed and rated as conspiracy theory was primarily published in the social domain. These contents were published in Albanian and Serbian in mainstream media and accounts and pages on social media. While content in Serbian was published in mainstream media, including baseless claims by the Office for Kosovo in the Serbian Government, interpreting various incidents in majority-Serb settlements as a tendency aimed at the expulsion of Serbs from their settlements in Kosovo.

02. Clickbait

All content rated as "clickbait" was published by publishers (mainstream media, dubious portals and social media) in Albanian language. A considerable portion originated from domain of social issues and black chronicle. Content from the black chronicle domain covered tragic topics, including various deaths and murders, though these events did not occur in Kosovo and this was not disclosed in the article headlines. Meanwhile, social domain content was related to the topic of massive exodus of the population after visa liberalization, about pellet and wood prices, the distribution of financial resources by the government and the increase in rent prices.

04. Unverified Content

Almost all unverified content pieces were published on social media by publishers in Albanian and Serbian languages. Mainly, content from the social and security domain predominated, however there were no absence of the content from politics and sports domains as well. Within these contents there were published unverified images falsely claiming to depict the situation in the Israel-Hamas conflict, the arming of the KSF, Pope's images generated by artificial intelligence, etc.

06. Hoax

All fraudulent content was published on social media by accounts and pages in Albanian language. Within these contents, were published, manipulated images of the imam Shefqet Krasniqi from the domain of social issues and a photograph of a Swedish soldier falsely claiming to be from the KSF from the security domain. Also, fraudulent content with claims about loan provision and customer reviews, as well as the possibility of improving the user's business account, was published.

Other articles with misinformation content have been rated in categories such as: Error, Clickbait/Disinformation, Fact Manipulation/Disinformation, Clickbait/Fact Manipulation and Unverified Content/Error.

The topics used to create and disseminate disinformation content

MAIN CATEGORIES

Here are the main categories listed according to the topics



The main topic that has dominated in the content processed during January 2024 is about the various tragic events (deaths, murders). The reduction of content related to the Israel-Hamas conflict and the arming of the KSF, which dominated the previous two months (November, December 2023), has led various content with the topics of "tragic events", including numerous deaths and murders, to return to the top of misinformation topics.

In the course of January, misinformation content has been published by Serbian media related to some incidents in majority-Serb settlements. These incidents were misinterpreted by the Office for Kosovo in the Serbian Government as a tendency for the expulsion of Serbs from their settlements, even though no evidence was provided for this and moreover that the motivation and the perpetrators themselves were unknown. This has led this topic to rank as the second during this month.

Since 1 January, citizens of the Republic of Kosovo were allowed to travel visa-free to Schengen countries, leading to the spread of misinformation related to the massive exodus of the population. Clickbait and disinformation content about the number of those who have traveled from Kosovo were published in both mainstream and social media, not providing specific information in titles or in the content about what concretely is being referred to. As a result of this misleading contents, this topic was ranked third in January 2024.

In addition to these topics, there has been misinformation during January on the topics such as: employment in Switzerland, military maneuvers on the Kosovo-Serbia border, the Israel-Hamas conflict, the arming of the KSF and other topics.



45% of the main topics are about various tragic events, incidents in Serbian settlements, massive exodus of the population, employment in Switzerland, military maneuvers Kosovo-Serbia and the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Fact-checking analysis according to topics

2.1

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.

01. **Tragic Events (Death, Murder)**

All misinformation from this topic has been published on news portals (12%) and social media (3%) in the black chronicle domain. A considerable number of them have been rated as "clickbait," but ratings such as clickbait/manipulation of facts, disinformation and unverified content/error are not lacking. Articles within this misinformation topic have covered tragic events such as deaths, murders, accidents and misfortunes in various circumstances and the location of the events is not disclosed in their titles with the aim of encouraging clicks from readers.

03. **Massive Exodus of Population**

Almost all of the misleading content related to this social topic has been published in mainstream and social media in the Albanian language, and mainstream media in the Serbian language. While contents in the Albanian language was rated as "clickbait," those in the Serbian language were rated as disinformation. Misinformation in the Albanian language mostly were related with numbers of passengers from the airport, where titles or used photos were misleading. In the Serbian language, disinformation was published claiming that a massive population exodus from Kosovo has started and that 10 thousand workers from the gastronomy sector have left Kosovo.

02. **Serbian Settlements**

Misleading content related to incidents in Serbian settlements has been rated as conspiracy theories and has been published by Serbian-language media based on media communications from the Office for Kosovo in the Government of Serbia. All these contents were from the social domain, where looting or incidents in Serbian settlements, the Office interprets without evidence that the action is aimed at the expulsion of Serbs, even though the perpetrators and their motivation are unknown.

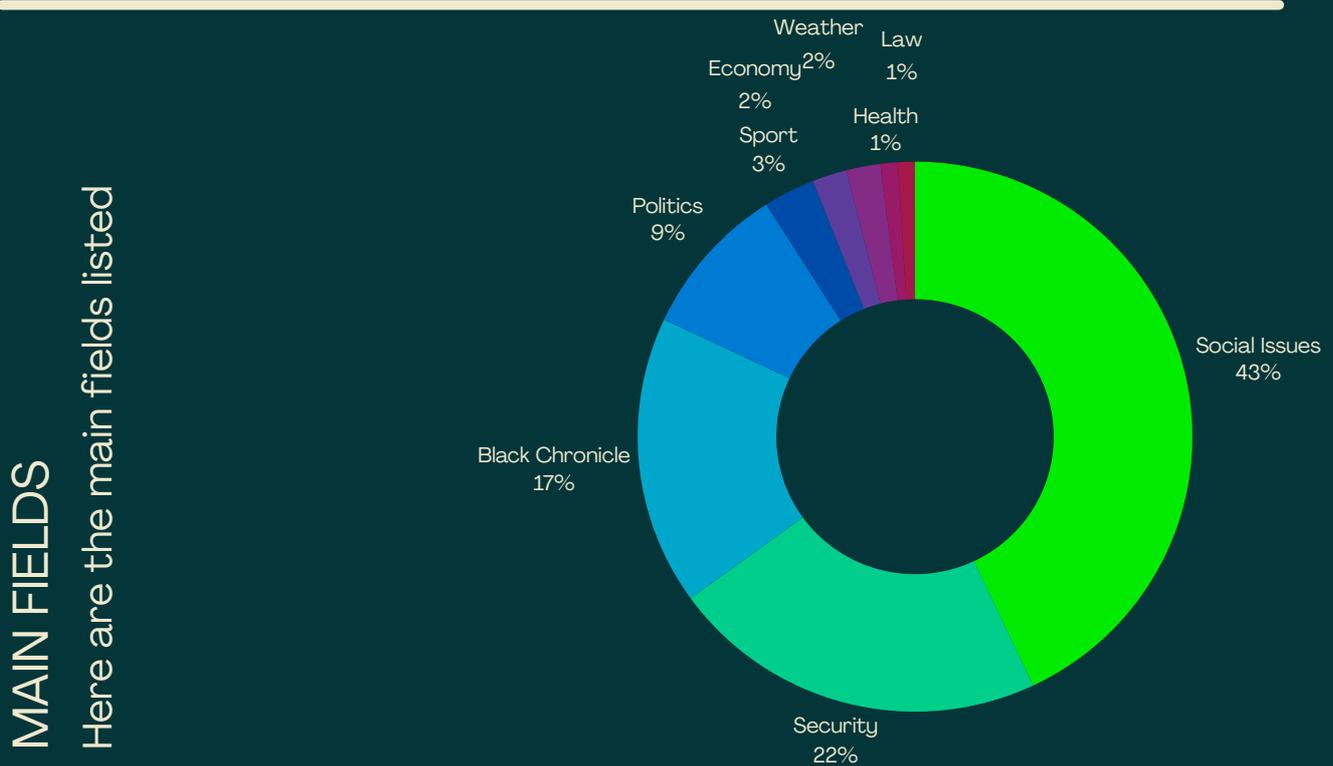
04. **Jobs in Switzerland**

Misleading content related to the topic of employment in Switzerland has been published by pages and accounts on social media in the Albanian language. These misinformation from the social domain were rated as disinformation, fake news and clickbait. Disinformation was rated an old news about the Swiss jobs market being presented as current. Fake news was rated the false claim that Switzerland is seeking 1 million workers. Meanwhile, clickbait was rated an old news about the labor shortage in Switzerland, being republished.

3

Types of domains

The results of the monitoring of misinformation for the month of January 2024 show that various publishers (mainstream media, dubious portals and social media) have predominantly published misinformation from the social domain. As a result of misinformation contents during this month, various topics related to the social aspect were extensively used for disinformation. Following the social domain, misinformation contents from the security domain is most commonly used for disinformation.



These two domains also dominated during the previous month (December 2023), with the social domain maintaining the same percentage (42% in December 2023, 43% in January 2024), and the security domain has experienced a decrease in percentage as a result of reduced developments in this topic (31% in December 2023, 22% in January 2024). A considerable proportion of misinformation content has originated from the social domain, including the two main topics of this month: the massive exodus of population and incidents in Serbian settlements. Social issues are followed by the security domain as a result of the publication of misinformation, military maneuvers on the Kosovo-Serbia border, arming of the KSF and other content related to their salaries or images published claiming to depict members of the KSF. These two domains constitute 65% of the misinformation content processed during the month of January 2024.

These two domains are followed by the black chronicle as a result of clickbait articles published on this domain, which ranked at the highest percentage as an rated category during this month. The black chronicle is followed by politics with 9%.

misinformation from this domain include: the arming of the KSF, military exercises and maneuvers on the Kosovo-Serbia border, warnings of war in Kosovo and Bosnia, etc.

The majority of content from the social domain has been published on social media (25%) and mainstream media (14%). They were rated as disinformation at 11%, clickbait at 9%, conspiracy theories at 8%, unverified content at 5% and others. While 34% of the content from this domain is in the Albanian language, 9% is in the Serbian language, related to developments in Kosovo.

Almost all content from the security domain has been published in the Albanian language, predominantly on social media (14%) and mainstream media (6%). Misinformation content from the security domain was mainly rated as disinformation (6%), fake news (6%) and unverified content (3%). Topics used for misinformation from this domain include: the arming of the KSF, military exercises and maneuvers on the Kosovo-Serbia border, warnings of war in Kosovo and Bosnia, etc.

A considerable portion of contents from the black chronicle has been published in both mainstream and social media. Majority of them were rated as "clickbait" related to tragic events such as death and murder in various circumstances.

Misinformation from the political domain has been published in mainstream media (5%) and social media (5%), where a considerable portion have been rated as manipulation of facts/disinformation (3%) and disinformation (3%). The prohibition of the dinar and Serbian goods, Kosovo-Albania unification, Israel-Hamas conflict were some of the topics used for misinformation from the political domain.



91% of the misinformation contents processed pertain to social issues, security, the black chronicle and politics.

4

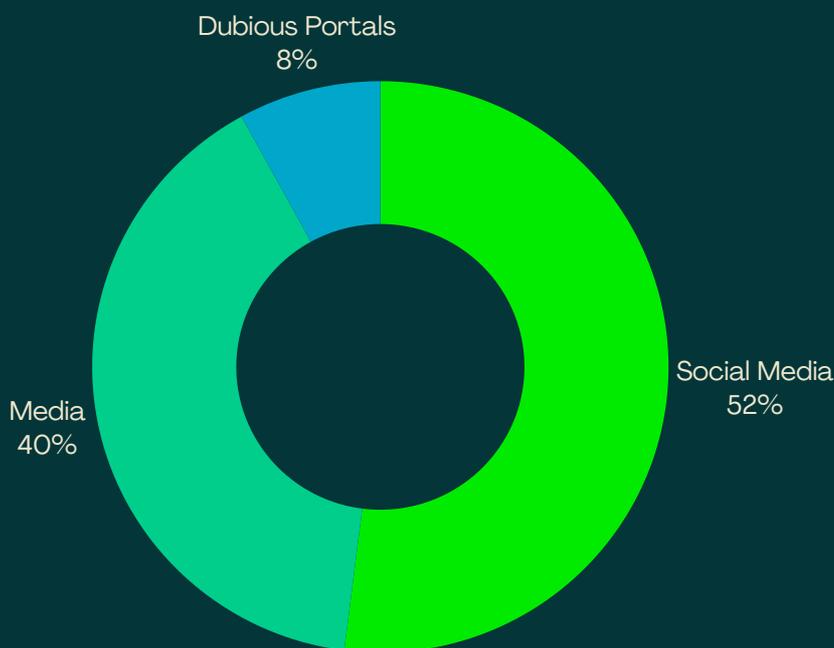
Types of publishers

According to the findings upon misinformation contents during January 2024, which has been processed based on the methodology, it results that the largest number of misinformation pieces were published on social media (52%). Compared to December 2023, social media has experienced a decline of 12% (from 64% in December 2023 to 52% in January 2024). This is the result of the publication from pages and accounts on social media of a considerable proportion of disinformation, all of the unverified content and fake news.

Meanwhile, the processed misinformation content in mainstream media has marked an increase of 15% (from 25% in December 2023 to 40% in January 2024), as a result of the publication in mainstream media of almost all clickbait articles, a significant proportion of disinformation and conspiracy theories.

In dubious portals, similarly to December, almost the same number of misinformation content has been published and processed (from 11% in December 2023 to 8% in January 2024). A portion of the misinformation rated as "clickbait" and disinformation has been published by these dubious portals.

DIFFERENCE IN PERCENTAGE
BETWEEN PUBLISHERS WITH
DISINFORMATION CONTENT



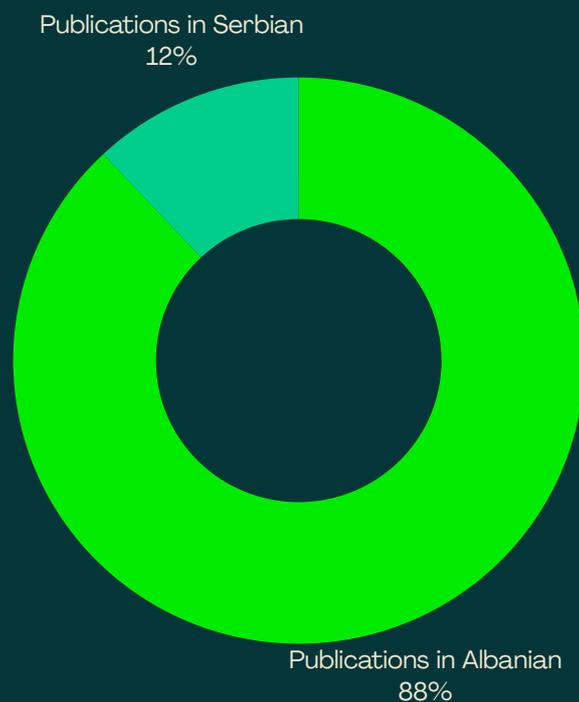
92% of articles with misinformation content were published by publishers in social media (52%) and in media outlets (40%).

5

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.

PERCENTAGE OF MEDIA PUBLICATIONS IN ALBANIAN AND SERBIAN LANGUAGES



The monitoring sample from the platform "hibrid.info" focuses on misinformation content in the Albanian language published in mainstream media, dubious portals and pages and accounts on social media, therefore, publications in this language dominate the analysis with 88%. Meanwhile, in the Serbian language, reports of misinformation in mainstream media regarding developments on and about Kosovo are primarily monitored and precisely such contents are processed. As a result of the publication of disinformation about the mass exodus of the population from Kosovo due to visa liberalization and conspiracy theories related to incidents in Serbian settlements, misinformation in this language constitutes 12% of the findings processed conducted during January 2024.

Analysis of articles in this category

5.1

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

Slightly more than half of the processed misinformation in the Albanian language has been published on social media (51%), while the rest is divided between mainstream media (29%) and dubious portals (8%). While fake news dominated in December 2023, in January 2024, disinformation and clickbait articles took the lead, due to the reasons that the majority of the content from the social and black chronicle domains have been rated into these two categories.

02. Publications in Serbian language

All of the processed misinformation content in the Serbian language has been published by mainstream media covering topics related to social issues, security and politics. Publications in the media in the Serbian language are rated as conspiracy theories (6%), disinformation (3%), unverified content (2%) and manipulation of facts/disinformation (2%). Whereas, conspiracy theories were related to incidents in Serbian-majority settlements, disinformation was linked to the claim of mass exodus of population from Kosovo after visa liberalization. Unverified content included reports of gunfire at the Kosovo-Serbia border and manipulation of facts/disinformation related to the Reçak massacre.



Types of social media

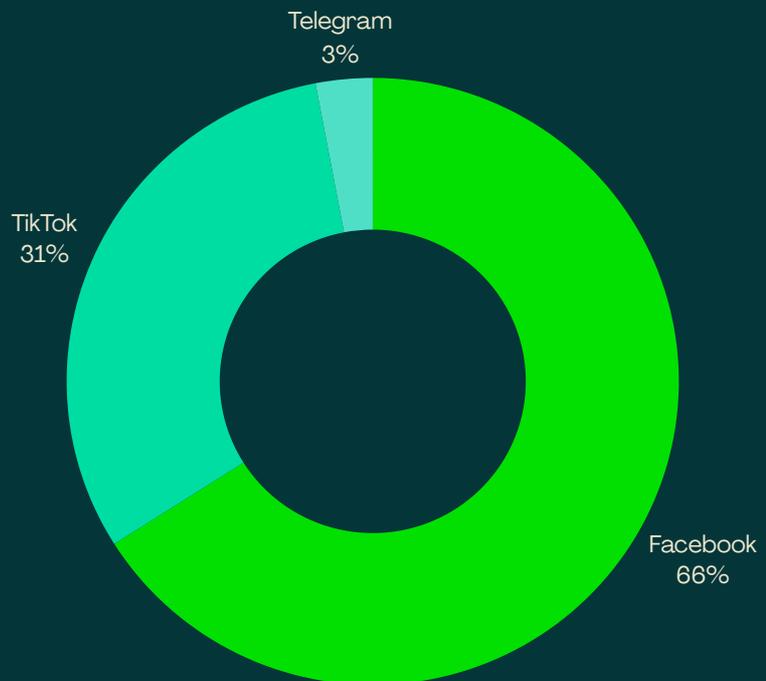
In this section, only disinformation articles published and disseminated on social media are analyzed, excluding publications in other media outlets (mainstream media and dubious portals).

From the content found and processed in January 2024, it appears that 65% of it was published on Facebook, followed by content published on TikTok at 31%, and Telegram at 3%.

Similar to the previous month (December 2023), during this month (January 2024), misinformation published on Facebook dominates, marking an increase of 11% (from 55% in December 2023 to 66% in January 2024). Misinformation on TikTok has also decreased during January 2024 by 14% compared to December 2023 (from 45% in December 2023 to 31% in January 2024).

These two platforms are followed by the social media platform Telegram (3%), where unverified content related to a security issue was published.

PERCENTAGE OF PUBLICATIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA



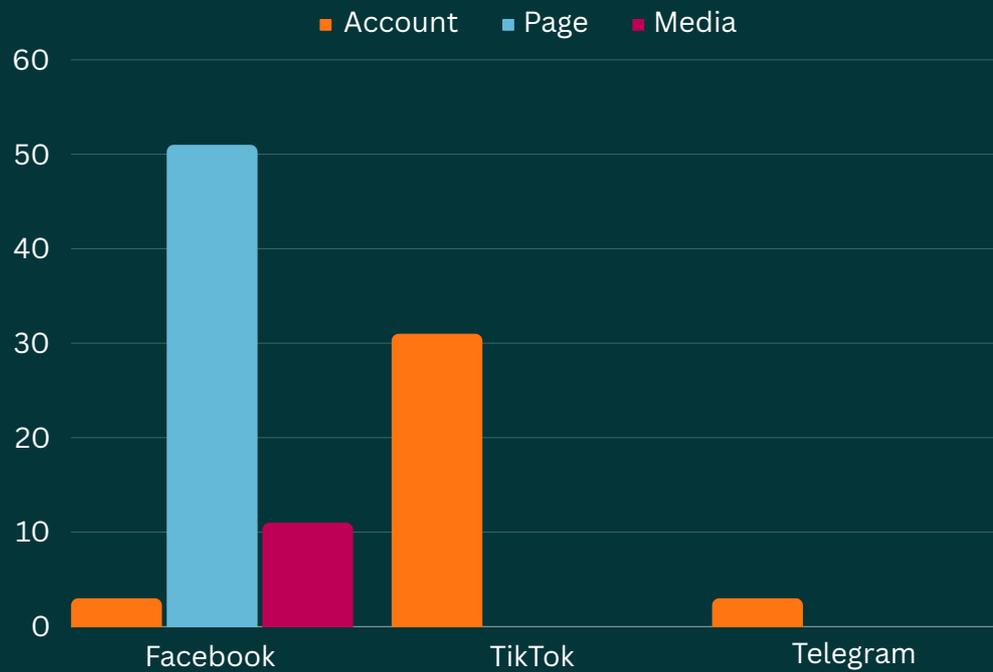
6.1

Types of publishers in social media

This measurement analyzes, through monitoring data, the interaction on social media regarding the publication and dissemination of disinformation articles by various publishers on social media platforms. This is done through these main categories of publishers: accounts, pages, profiles, media and channels managed by social media users.

The content found and processed on social media for the month of January 2024 was mostly published on various pages on Facebook (51%), followed by accounts on TikTok (31%). In addition, 11% of the content was published by media pages on Facebook and 3% from accounts on both Facebook and Telegram.

PERCENTAGE OF TYPES OF PUBLISHERS IN SOCIAL MEDIA



6.2

Analysis of Types of Publishers on Social Media

The following categories of social media are analyzed in relation to the publication and dissemination of disinformation content.

01. Facebook

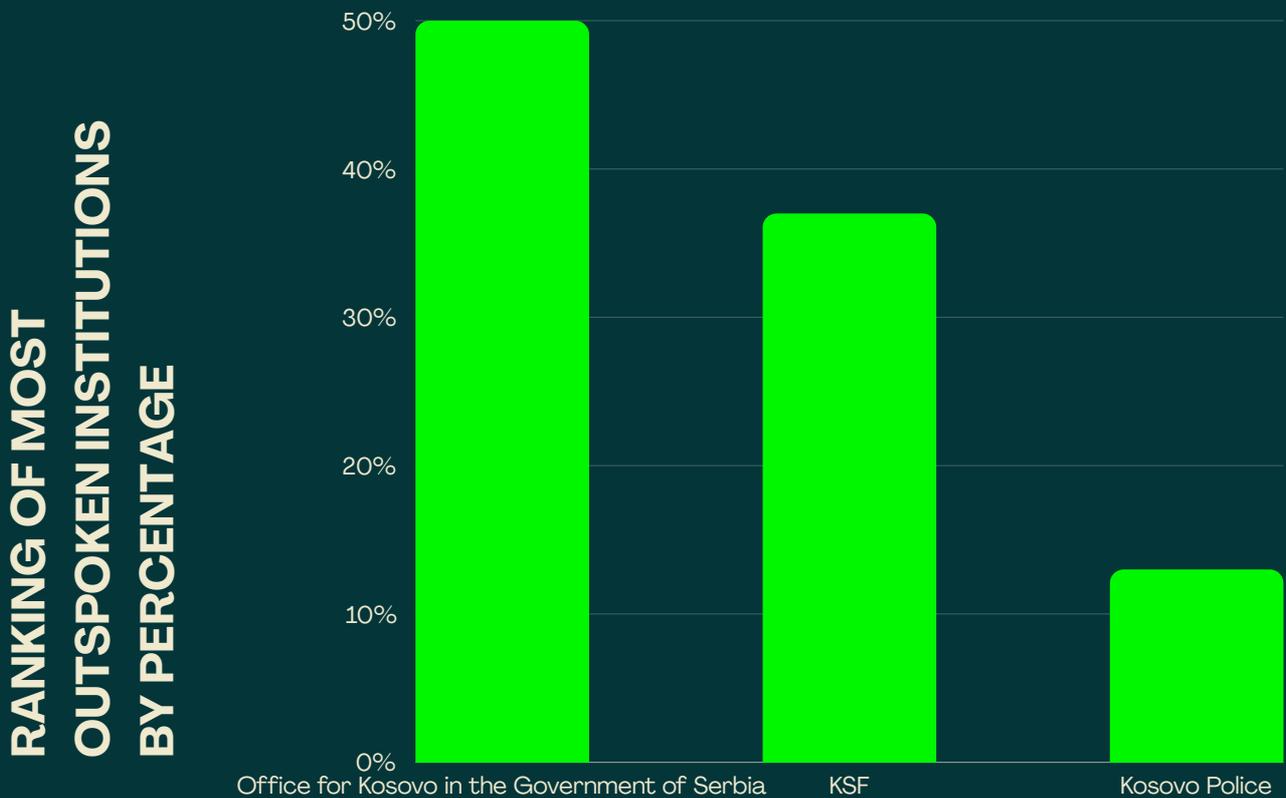
Unverified content (14%), clickbait (14%) and disinformation (14%) are the categories with which have been most frequently rated the misinformation published on Facebook pages and accounts. The majority of this misinformation is related to the social domain (37%), followed by the black chronicle (9%) and security (6%). In terms of the topics volume used for misinformation on Facebook, the dominant ones are the Israel-Hamas conflict (9%), employment in Switzerland (6%) and various tragic events (6%).

02. TikTok

Unverified content (14%), clickbait (14%) and disinformation (14%) are the categories with which have been most frequently rated the misinformation published on Facebook pages and accounts. The majority of this misinformation is related to the social domain (37%), followed by the black chronicle (9%) and security (6%). In terms of the topics volume used for misinformation on Facebook, the dominant ones are the Israel-Hamas conflict (9%), employment in Switzerland (6%) and various tragic events (6%).

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.

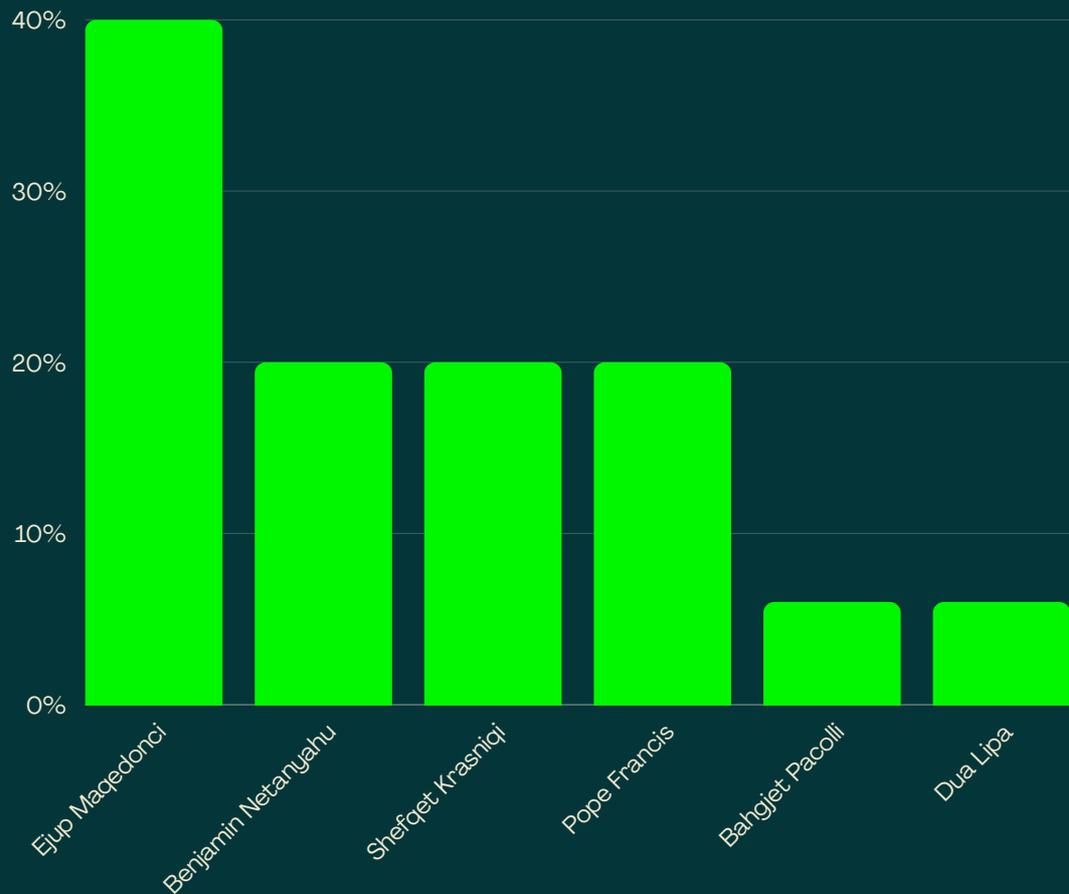


Based on the monitoring for January 2024, in the misleading content published about developments on and about Kosovo, the Office for Kosovo in the Government of Serbia is the most mentioned institution. This institution was mentioned in four misleading contents by Serbian-language media, including the interpretation of incidents in Serbian settlements as a tendency for their expulsion from Kosovo, coordinated by official Prishtina.

The Kosovo Security Force (KSF), as a security institution, is the second most mentioned institution in misleading content. This security institution was mentioned in three misleading contents related to the arming of this institution with various weapons, as well as claims about their salaries.

Meanwhile, the Kosovo Police was mentioned in a fake news where the images of military exercises of Azerbaijani forces were presented as moments of exercises of the Special Units of the Kosovo Police.

RANKING OF MOST OUTSPOKEN INDIVIDUALS BY PERCENTAGE



Minister of Defense of the Republic of Kosovo, Ejup Maqedonci, is the most mentioned personality in the misinformation found and processed during the month of January 2024. Minister Maqedonci was mentioned in a publication on social media with the misinforming claim that the KSF would be equipped with anti-tank "Panzerfaust", as well as incorrect (error) reports in the media about investments in armaments within one mandate.

Benjamin Netanyahu, Shefqet Krasniqi and Pope Francis are three other figures mentioned once each.

The cover of "Time" magazine featuring the false image of Benjamin Netanyahu was published. On social media, a manipulated photograph of Shefqet Krasniqi in Serbian military uniform was posted. Additionally, an artificially generated image of Pope Francis was published, depicting him in intimate moments with a woman.



Checking and evaluation of statements

Hibrid.info, in addition to monitoring and analyzing media articles, also conducts checking and evaluations of statements made by high-ranking political and institutional officials, as well as those figures with public influence. The evaluation of these figures, according to the methodology of hibrid.info, is carried out under the categories of truthfulness, sustainability and holding of promises.

RANKING OF CHECKING AND EVALUATION OF STATEMENTS



Within the content monitored during the month of January, hibrid.info checked and analyzed one promise.

Prime Minister Albin Kurti had stated that the Prishtinë – Gjilan highway would be completed and inaugurated within the year 2023. After verification by hibrid.info, it has been confirmed that there is no official announcement that the opening of this highway occurred in 2023.

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, maintained and updated on regular daily basis by the ADS/hibrid.info staff, articles with misinformation content are monitored. The selection of misinformation contents for analysis is based on importance, relevance, virality and context. These criteria are determined by the experienced monitoring team in the information sphere.

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 – 31 of January 2023, having processed 65 misleading contents.

Conclusions

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

Based on the misleading contents found and processed during January 2024, articles rated as disinformation (26%) have dominated the landscape, followed by "clickbait" articles (22%) and fake news (12%). The reason disinformation has dominated this month is that many misleading contents related to various social topics have been rated as disinformation. Meanwhile, "clickbait" articles are from the domain of black chronicles related to tragic events (death, murder) and social issues, with the dominant topic being the mass exodus of the population, primarily published in informative media in Albanian and Serbian languages. Fake news are primarily from the security domain related to military exercises on the Kosovo–Serbia border and social issues such as employment in Switzerland and other social topics.

Various tragic events, including death, murder, accidents, are the themes that have dominated during January 2024. Articles within the context of tragic events of misinformation have covered deaths, murders, accidents, and misfortunes in various circumstances or even various social topics for which the location of the events is not disclosed in their headlines, or the titles are misleading with the aim of encouraging clicks from readers, which mainly have been rated as "clickbait" and published on informative portals. In the course of January 2024, several conspiracy theories have been published by Serbian-language media referring to the Office for Kosovo in the Government of Serbia for incidents in Serbian settlements, where was interpreted without facts that they are carried out in coordination with official Prishtina with the aim of expelling Serbs from Kosovo. The mass exodus of the population is the third most used topic for misinformation by media in Serbian and Albanian languages. In the media in Serbian language, misinformation was disseminated with claims that the exodus of the population from Kosovo has already begun, while in the mainstream media and social media in the Albanian language, "clickbait" articles were published about travels from Pristina International Airport.

Almost half of the misinformation content found and processed in January 2024 is from the social domain (43%). The two main topics that have prevailed, incidents in Serbian settlements and the massive exodus

of the population, adding to this the employment in Switzerland, are from the social domain. The majority of misinformation published in this domain was rated as disinformation (11%), "clickbait" (9%) and conspiracy theories (8%) and they were published on social media (25%), mainstream media (14%) and dubious portals (5%). The social domain is followed by the security domain (22%), in terms of published misinformation contents, which was mostly rated as disinformation (6%) and fake news (6%). These misleading contents were mainly published on social media related to military maneuvers on the Kosovo-Serbia border, the arming of the KSF, war in Kosovo, etc. On the other hand, misinformation contents from the black chronicle was mainly published in mainstream media, most of which were rated "clickbait". The main topics are various tragic events for which the location of the event is not clarified in the title, leaving room for misinformation.

Minister of Defense, Ejup Maqedonci, is the most mentioned personality in some of the misinformation content processed. Maqedonci was implicated in claims about investments in weapons systems, as well as in the announcement that the KSF would be equipped with "Panzerfaust" anti-tank, claiming without evidence that it was stated by him. Regarding institutions, the Office for Kosovo in the Government of Serbia is involved in media reports in the Serbian language related to incidents in Serbian settlements in Kosovo, for which it is claimed without evidence that they are in coordination with the official Prishtina with the aim of expelling Serbs from Kosovo. Another institution mentioned is the KSF, with claims about arming it with various military equipment and about the salaries of KSF members.

In terms of checking statements and promises, Prime Minister Albin Kurti previously stated that the Prishtinë – Gjilan highway would be finalized and inaugurated by the year 2023. However, upon verification by hibrid.info, it has been confirmed that there is no official announcement that the opening of this highway took place in 2023.

HIBRIDO.INFO