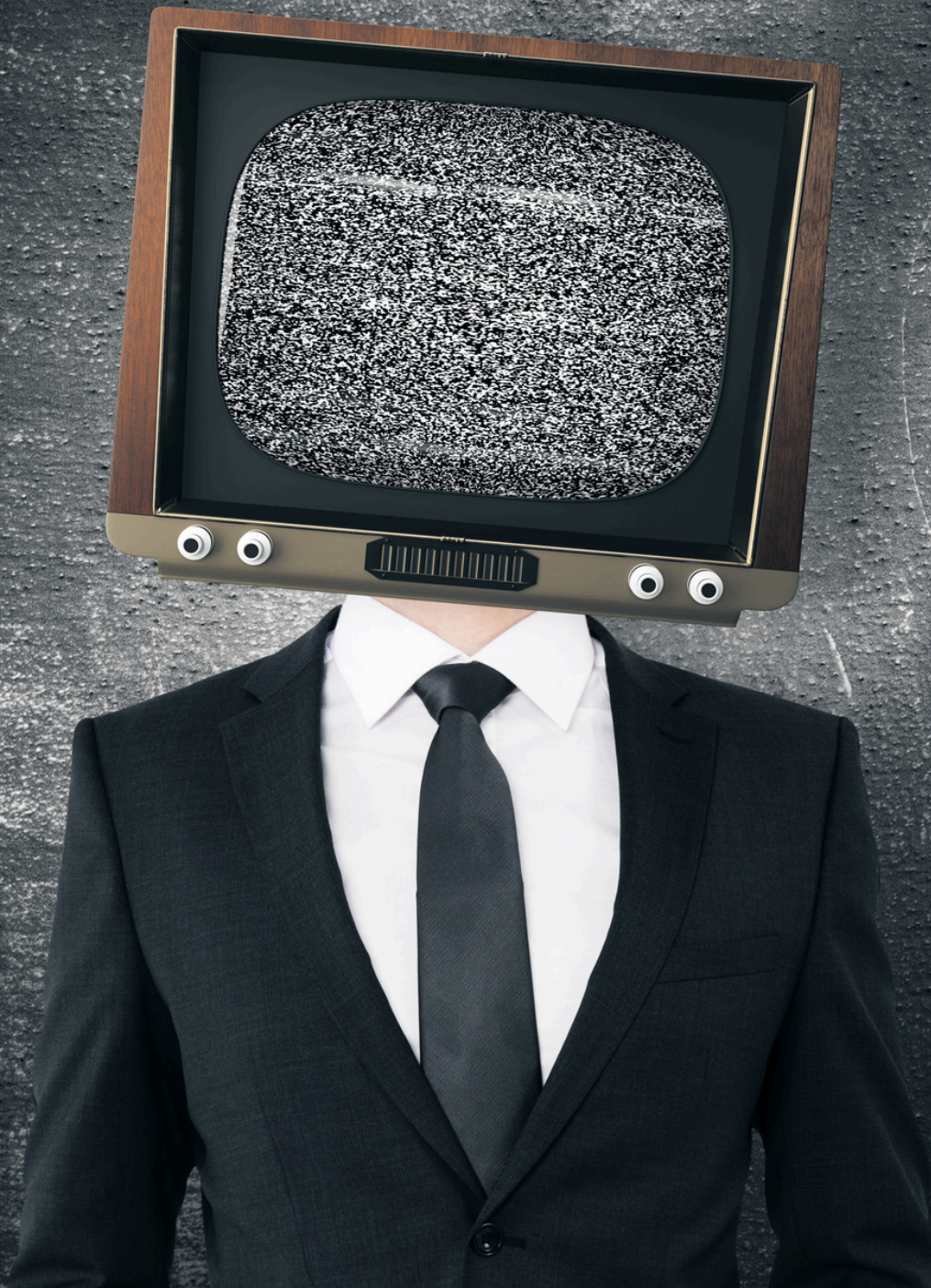


BEHIND THE SCREENS

Annual report on the state of information
disorder

July, 2024



HIBRIDO.INFO

Behind the Screens

Annual report on the state of information disorder

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this monitoring and analytical report is to reflect on the state of information disorder in Kosovo in the period July 2023 – June 2024, according to data collected by the fact-checking platform "hibrid.info".

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

The report aims to analyze information disorder in Kosovo through empirical data obtained from the daily monitoring activities of the "hibrid.info" platform. The report consists of three key sections:

- The first section of the report exhaustively examines and analyzes monitoring data of a one-year period of information disorder in Kosovo through various measurements aimed at combating information disorder.
- The second section compares monitoring data of this annual period (July 2023 – June 2024) with the data from previous annual period (July 2022 – June 2023) in specific categories and fields of information disorder in Kosovo.
- The final section of the report addresses the latest developments regarding media regulation in Kosovo, including recent legal changes related to the regulation of Kosovan media, including online media.

Main findings of this report

During this period of the year (July 2023 – June 2024), the monitoring data from the "hibrid.info" platform on information disorder in Kosovo shows that various publishers mostly published articles in the "Clickbait" category. About 22% of articles were rated as "Clickbait", followed by misleading content^[1] rated as "Disinformation" at 21%.

Regarding misleading "Clickbait" articles, they were mostly published and shared in the field of sensational news and social topics that provoke readers' curiosity to click on such publications. All articles in this rating category were published in Albanian language. Specifically, real Albanian-language media published the majority of such content, accounting for 83% of the total, while other publishers contributed significantly less, with various Facebook publishers at 11% and suspicious portals at 6%.

On the other hand, misleading content rated as "Disinformation" mostly addressed political and security issues. The majority of disinformation, 85%, was published by Albanian-language publishers, including those on social media, real media, and suspicious media. Regarding disinformation in Albanian, the vast majority, or 61%, was created and shared on social media, primarily by pages and accounts on Facebook and TikTok. The remaining disinformation was distributed in significantly

smaller percentages by real media (12%) and suspicious media (12%). Regarding disinformation published in Albanian, social media publishers, primarily pages and accounts on Facebook and TikTok, have created the most misleading content about security and political events. This includes the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict, events in northern Kosovo such as the attack by Serbian terrorists in the village Banjska in Zvečan against the Kosovo Police, explosions in the north, the war in Ukraine, and the arming of the Kosovo Security Force, among other topics.

Regarding disinformation in Albanian, the vast majority, or 61%, was created and shared on social media, primarily by pages and accounts on Facebook and TikTok. The remaining disinformation was distributed in significantly smaller percentages by real media (12%)

[1] In this report, misleading content refers to those publications that are disseminated as inaccurate information with the tendency to present themselves as facts, distortions of facts, fake and unverified news, as well as various forms of violations of fundamental principles of proper information dissemination, which should ensure independent, objective, and truthful information for the public.

In contrast, real Albanian-language media, although publishing fewer pieces of disinformation, have focused on political and security issues with misleading content about the north of Kosovo, Central Bank of Kosovo's decision on the Serbian dinar, etc. Suspicious Albanian-language media have predominantly addressed social issues in their distributed disinformation and focused less on political or security matters.

On the other hand, about 14% of disinformation monitored for this period of the year were published in Serbian language. Nearly all of them were published by legitimate Serbian-language media (12%), with a smaller portion coming from Serbian-language social media publishers (2%). Serbian-language media have published disinformation related to political and security issues in Kosovo, focusing primarily on events in the north and organized Serbian terrorist attack in Banjska and claims by Serbian-language media that the Kosovo Police is terrorizing Serbs in the northern municipalities of Kosovo.

The disinformation published by legitimate Serbian-language media is part of a Serbian narrative aimed misinforming about the developments in Kosovo. This content is not based on confirming or verifying facts and sources of information in order to misinform about events in and around Kosovo.

The disinformation published by legitimate Serbian-language media is part of a Serbian narrative aimed misinforming about the developments in Kosovo. This content is not based on confirming or verifying facts and sources of information in order to misinform about events in and around Kosovo. According to media experts in Kosovo, the Serbian narrative toward Kosovo is similar to or mirrors the Russian narrative toward Ukraine, labeling Kosovo as a "failed state." This narrative is exploited by media close to the Serbian government to create and spread such disinformation against Kosovo.

The main topic of disinformation during this period has been the Israel-Hamas conflict. This topic has prompted Albanian-language publishers, particularly sites, accounts, and media operating on social media, to create and disseminate the majority of misleading content during this period. Approximately 10% of published topics are about this foreign conflict, with tragic incidents ranking second with 6.5% and events in northern Kosovo coming in third at 6.3%, respectively. This is the first time that the north of Kosovo is not the most covered topic by publishers

in their disinformation content.

Almost all misleading articles about the Israel-Hamas conflict were published in Albanian (98%), and nearly all of them (96%) were published and disseminated by Albanian-language publishers on social media, with 91% on Facebook and 5% on TikTok. More specifically, they were published mainly by social media publishers whose

publications are considered pro-Islamic with content in the Albanian language. “Hibrid.info” has found that this is the first international conflict where artificial intelligence has been used to create fabricated images claiming to depict the situation in the Israel-Hamas conflict, which have been classified as misleading content. Regarding the misleading content about tragic incidents, all of it has been published in Albanian. Real Albanian-language media have published majority of this content (84%), with a smaller portion coming from social media publishers (14%) and suspicious media (2%). Regarding the north, most of the misleading publications on this topic were disseminated by social

The main topic of disinformation during this period has been the Israel-Hamas conflict. This topic has prompted Albanian-language publishers, particularly sites, accounts, and media operating on social media, to create and disseminate the majority of misleading content during this period.

media publishers (62%), followed by real media (32%) and suspicious media (6%). Almost $\frac{3}{4}$, or 74%, of the misleading content about the north has been published in Albanian, of which social media publishers dominate with 52%, followed by real media with 16%, and suspicious media with 6%. As for publications about the North in other languages, 24% of them were published in Serbian, of which 16% in real media and 8% by publishers in social media. While about 2% of misleading articles about the North were published in English on social media.

On the other hand, the thematic area where various publishers have produced the most misleading content is the security field, with 27%, followed by social issues with 23% and political issues with 22%. These are the three most common areas of misinformation during this period. Other areas with significant misinformation include sensational news, accounting for 14%, and various other thematic areas, also at 14% (such as sports, weather, economy, health, etc.). It seems that the dominance of the security field during this period is mainly due to the

prevalence of misleading publications about the Israel-Hamas conflict by Albanian-language publishers on social media. Additionally, it can be noted that security aspect and politics have been the most prevalent topics during this period, accounting for a combined 49% of all misinformation, compared to sensational news and social issues, which together make up about 37% of all misinformation articles from July 2023 to June 2024.

The vast majority of publications with misleading content during this period of the year were created and distributed on social media by various Albanian-language publishers.

The vast majority of publications with misleading content during this period of the year were created and distributed on social media by various Albanian-language publishers. This is one of the main findings of the monitoring report, as it is the first time that more misleading content has been observed on social media compared to other types of media. In this context, 56% of the misinformation publications were produced by various publishers on social media, 39% by real media, and only 5% by suspicious media.

During this period of the year, Albanian-language publishers on Facebook were responsible for the majority of misleading articles, accounting for 38% of the total, covering not only Kosovo-related topics but also international developments. In second place are misleading publications on TikTok, with 14%, while other social media platforms have significantly lower percentages, at 4% (Telegram, X, YouTube, Instagram, and Reddit).

Social media publishers have primarily focused on creating and disseminating misleading articles in the categories of disinformation (14%) and fake news (14%), as well as unverified content (11%) and hoax (10%). On Facebook, there has been a higher prevalence of disinformation and unverified content, while TikTok has primarily featured fake news. Furthermore, social media publishers, with nearly all of them operating in Albanian (98%), have mostly published misleading articles in the fields of security (20%), social issues (14%), and politics (11%). As noted earlier, the primary focus of misinformation from social media publishers was the conflict between Israel and Hamas. Approximately 96% of misleading content about this foreign conflict was published on social media, with 91% on Facebook and 5%

on TikTok. The main reasons for monitoring misleading articles about the Israel-Hamas conflict are that this topic has dominated all other subjects and has had a significant impact. Specifically, it has generated considerable engagement with numerous clicks and comments on Facebook and TikTok from various users. Other topics covered by social media publishers included the arming of Kosovo Security Force (7%), northern Kosovo (7%), and lending issues (5%), among others.

In contrast, real media primarily published misleading content in the "clickbait" category (18%), with other categories being less addressed, such as disinformation (5%) and conspiracy theories (5%). Real media have primarily published misleading content about politics (11%), sensational news (10%), followed by social issues (7%) and security (6%). The most covered topic by real media was tragic incidents, accounting for 13%, followed by misleading reports about deaths at 5% and the northern region, also at 5%. Additionally, out of all misleading publications from real media, 81% were published by Albanian-language media, while 18% were published by Serbian-language media. Among real Albanian-language media, misleading content predominantly falls into the "clickbait" category, far surpassing other categories such as errors, unverified content, and disinformation. In contrast, Serbian-language media primarily feature misleading content in the categories of conspiracy theories and disinformation related to events in Kosovo.

Meanwhile, suspicious media have primarily published disinformation (3%), although this type of publisher has produced significantly less content compared to other publishers (social media and real media). They have primarily disseminated misleading articles on social issues (2%).

The most discussed institutions in misleading articles are the Kosovo security institutions, such as the Kosovo Security Force and Kosovo Police, particularly in relation to events involving these security sector institutions during this annual period. Meanwhile, the most talked-about individual is the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, within the context of misleading content published by various publishers about developments mainly in the political and security fields in Kosovo.

CLICKBAIT (22%)	Topic	
	Tragic cases	24.3%
	Deaths	9.6%
	Earthquakes	3.4%
	Murders	3.4%
	Other	59.3%
DISINFORMATION (21%)	Topic	
	Conflict Israel-Hamas	14.1%
	North	11.2%
	War in Ukraine	4.1%
	Work in Switzerland	3.5%
	Other	67.1%
FAKE NEWS (15%)	Topic	
	Arming of KSF	20.0%
	Conflict Israel-Hamas	6.7%
	North	5.8%
	Equipment of KSF	5.0%
	Other	62.5%
UNVERIFIED CONTENT (14%)	Topic	
	Conflict Israel-Hamas	32.7%
	North	9.7%
	Iran's attach on Israel	5.3%
	Arming of KSF	4.4%
	Other	47.9%
HOAX (10%)	Topic	
	Granting loans	25.9%
	Healing products	11.8%
	Prize drawing	5.9%
	Conflict Israel-Hamas	2.4%
	Other	54.0%
CONSPIRACY THEORY (5%)	Topic	
	Serb majority municipalities	40.0%
	North	10.0%
	Threat of war	5.0%
	Other	45.0%

Field		Type of publisher		Type of social media		Jezik	
Black chronicle	44.6%	Real media	83.0%	Facebook	11.1%	Albanski	100.0%
Social	22.6%	Social media	11.1%				
Politics	14.7%	Suspicious media	5.9%				
Security	5.1%						
Other	13.0%						
Field		Type of publisher		Type of social media		Jezik	
Security	37.3%	Social media	63.5%	Facebook	46.5%	Albanian	85.3%
Politics	29.0%	Real media	24.1%	TikTok	14.7%	Serbian	13.5%
Social	17.2%	Suspicious media	12.4%	X (formerly Twitter)	1.2%	English	1.2%
Sport	5.9%			Other social media	1.1%		
Other	10.6%						
Field		Type of publisher		Type of social media		Jezik	
Security	47.5%	Social media	95.0%	TikTok	50.8%	Albanian	97.5%
Politics	26.7%	Real media	2.5%	Facebook	39.2%	Serbian	2.5%
Social	10.0%	Suspicious media	2.5%	Telegram	2.5%		
Black chronicle	8.3%			YouTube	2.5%		
Other	7.5%						
Field		Type of publisher		Type of social media		Jezik	
Security	44.2%	Social media	77.0%	Facebook	66.4%	Albanian	93.8%
Social	23.9%	Real media	23.0%	TikTok	5.3%	Serbian	3.5%
Sport	11.5%			Telegram	1.8%	English	2.7%
Politics	10.6%			Other social media	3.5%		
Other	9.8%						
Field		Type of publisher		Type of social media		Jezik	
Social	58.8%	Social media	91.8%	Facebook	67.1%	Albanian	97.6%
Politika	17.6%	Suspicious media	5.9%	TikTok	22.4%	English	2.4%
Economy	9.4%	SMS	2.3%	X (formerly Twitter)	2.3%		
Security	4.7%						
Other	9.5%						
Field		Type of publisher		Type of social media		Jezik	
Security	37.5%	Real media	77.5%	Facebook	10.0%	Serbian	75.0%
Politics	32.5%	Social media	22.5%	TikTok	5.0%	Albanian	25.0%
Social	22.5%			Instagram	2.5%		
Other	7.5%			Telegram	2.5%		
				Twitter	2.5%		

Methodology

This report has been prepared using primarily quantitative methods for empirical data related to monitoring information disorder in Kosovo, as well as qualitative methods for specific sections of the report.

The quantitative section used daily monitoring data collected by the "hibrid.info" team based on daily activities. During this annual period of monitoring the information disorder, "hibrid.info" monitored 818 articles with misleading content published by various publishers in Albanian and other languages (Serbian and English). This number of articles serves as a representative sample for analyzing the monitoring data in this report. "hibrid.info" has conducted rigorous fact-checking on these articles, which were published on the platform daily, with an average of 3 articles addressed per day. In this report, data have been cross-referenced by comparing different categories of information disorder to better understand the trends in misinformation in Kosovo and identify challenges in combating information disorder, which is one of the main priorities of the "hibrid.info" platform.

Based on methodological criteria, "hibrid.info" monitors publishers that include real media (news portals), suspicious portals, and social media, classified as follows:

- Real media (news portals) that are registered as entities and are engaged in public information activities.
- Suspicious portals that do not provide information about their operations on their sites but, in practice, publish various types of information, often claiming and presenting themselves as media.
- Social media: accounts, pages, official pages, profiles on social media platforms such as: Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, Telegram, etc.

The selection of misleading content that generates information disorder in Kosovo and is monitored by "hibrid.info" is based on the following three main criteria:

- Importance of the content focusing on the significance of information and involvement of individuals in distributed information.
- Impact that content may have on the audience due to its political, socio-economic significance.
- Virality or dissemination flow of the content, including real media, suspicious portals, and social media.

Regarding the language of misleading content, "hibrid.info" monitors content published primarily in real media, suspicious portals, and social media that produce and distribute content in Albanian, as well as content in other languages related to Kosovo and its developments with a broader contextual connection published in real media and social media. In this case, Serbian-language publications are primarily monitored from the real media, with a smaller percentage from social media publishers (where Telegram predominantly stands out) that distribute misleading content in Serbian related to Kosovo. However, misleading content in Albanian predominates, and these two samples (in Albanian and Serbian) are not comparable with each other because, out of all the misleading content monitored by the "hibrid.info" platform for this annual period, 91% is in Albanian, 8% is in Serbian, and around 1% is in English.

In addition to media sources, the platform also uses other sources, such as social media profiles of public and political figures who shape the public opinion.

Qualitative data were obtained from discussions in the focus group with media experts, editors, and experienced journalists, organized in June 2024. This was preceded by a research activity involving the analysis and review of legal framework for media in Kosovo, as well as an examination of the public discourse related to media regulation in Kosovo. Additionally, media archives in Kosovo have served as another important source for this monitoring and research report.

To avoid misunderstandings of certain technical or professional terms used in the report, especially regarding the evaluative categories of informational disorder and types of publishers of misinformation, the report provides a practical and concrete explanation of these terms in the section titled "Glossary."

1. CONCEPT OF INFORMATION DISORDER

Information disorder, as an encompassing term for misinformation, disinformation, and fake news, was first introduced and defined in the professional and academic literature in 2017 in a report by the Council of Europe. According to this report, information disorder manifests itself through three main forms: misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation (intended to cause harm),[2] as summarized below:

MISINFORMATION

Spreading false information that doesn't necessarily mean it's harmful.

DISINFORMATION

Spreading false information intentionally to cause harm.

MAL- INFORMATION

Dissemination of truthful information to cause harm, often by transferring private information into the public domain

Research on this phenomenon gained significant attention in theoretical, professional, and academic circles, especially following the Brexit referendum campaign in the United Kingdom in June 2016 and the 2016 presidential election campaign in the United States. In these two significant European and global events, a large amount of fake news and disinformation was spread by various actors for manipulative purposes, including external influences often referred to as interference by Russia[3] to intervene in or influence major events at that 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

From then until now, information disorder, expressed in various forms, is no longer seen as a challenge limited to a single country but has become part of global politics and according to serious scholars addressing the theoretical and academic treatment of this phenomenon, it unfortunately seems to have become normalized in political discourse and communication.[4]

Furthermore, fake news and other forms of misinformation, within the context of disinformation, are seen as the main factor behind the decline of democracy on one hand, and the rise of authoritarianism, populism, racism, and societal polarization on the other.[5]

This combined theoretical, academic, and professional approach to understanding disinformation trends is crucial for grasping the dynamics of this phenomenon in the Western Balkans in general, and in Kosovo in particular. This is the primary goal of this monitoring report, which assesses the state of misinformation in Kosovo during the annual period from July 2023 to June 2024.

Furthermore, fake news and other forms of misinformation, within the context of disinformation, are seen as the main factor behind the decline of democracy on one hand, and the rise of authoritarianism, populism, racism, and societal polarization 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. ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION DISORDER MONITORING DATA IN KOSOVO

Information disorder is the common denominator for various types and methods of misinformation. To encompass all the ways and forms in which it develops, "hibrid.info" has categorized misinformation into several evaluation categories, based on the working methodology accepted by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) and the European Fact-Checking Standards Network, as follows:[6]

This categorization serves to comprehensively systematize misinformation and understand how it is conveyed and disseminated, helping us learn more about:

- Clickbait
- Disinformation
- Error
- Fake news
- Manipulation of facts
- Hoax
- Unverified contents
- Conspiracy theory

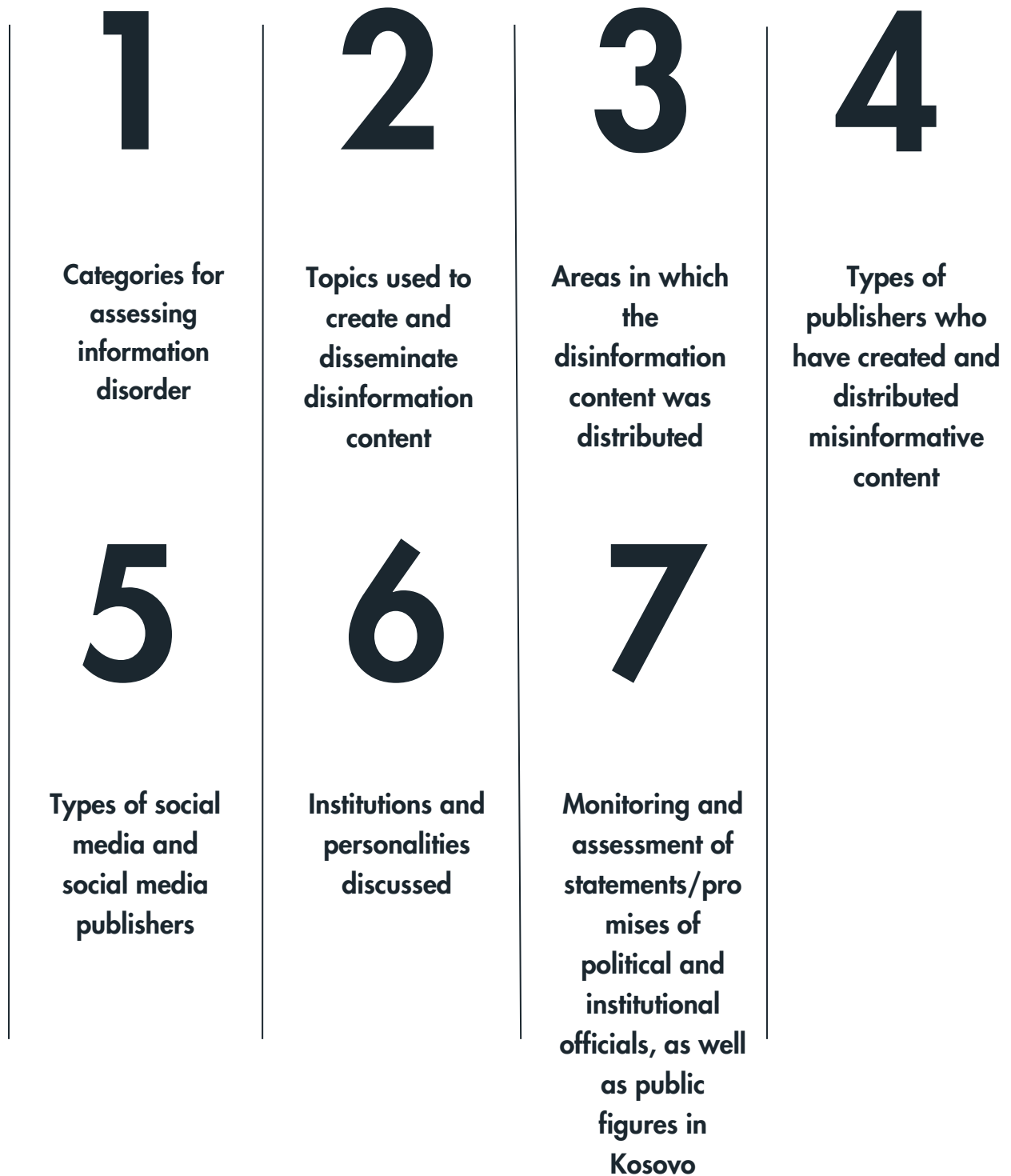
Context

Purpose

Actors and institutions involved in misinformation

[6] This report reflects those evaluation categories in which there have been the highest number of misinformation publications. For more details, see the "hibrid.info" methodology, which provides detailed concepts and explanations of the evaluation categories of information disorder: <https://hibrid.info/metodologija/>

This annual report analyzes the misinformation data for the annual period July 2023 - June 2024 and for this purpose "hibrid.info" has published twelve monitoring reports on a monthly basis^[7] on the state of misinformation in Kosovo. The aim is to provide a more objective clarification about the state of information and explain the trends of misinformation or information disorder for the monitoring period. The "hibrid.info" platform compares data on information disorder in each monthly report collected from the database through seven comparative categories, which are analyzed in this report:



[7] See monitoring reports published on a monthly basis by "hibrid.info": <https://hibrid.info/category/publikimet/raportet-mujore/>



1. Categories for Evaluating Information Disorder

This part of the report examines and analyzes the articles with misleading content according to the ratings they have received during this period of the year. The methodology of "hibrid.info" defines the criteria for evaluating categories of misinforming publications and how a particular misleading article can be assessed.[8]

During the period from July 2023 to June 2024, articles categorized as "Clickbait" have dominated compared to other evaluation categories published and shared by various publishers. They rank first with a total of 22%, followed by misleading articles categorized as "Disinformation" with 21%. The percentage difference between "Clickbait" and "Disinformation" articles is narrow, with only 1%, as observed in Figure 1.

Monitoring data from the "hibrid.info" platform shows that these two categories ("Clickbait" and "Disinformation") have dominated the most during this annual period. During the past twelve months (July 2023 – June 2024), "Clickbait" articles have topped the list more frequently than articles classified as "Disinformation," which have mostly ranked second.

However, in cases where there were more misleading articles in the areas of politics and security concerning Kosovo, "Clickbait" articles were behind "Disinformation" articles, particularly during the months of October 2023, December 2023, and April-May 2024, which are related to political and security events in the northern municipalities of Kosovo. Meanwhile, the frequency of reports with misleading content on crime and social issues has led to more "Clickbait" articles and fewer "Disinformation" articles. This is particularly evident during the months of July-September 2023 and February-March 2024.

Misinforming content that received other ratings in this period include categories "Fake news" (15%), "Unverified content" (14%), "Hoax" (10%) and other rating categories of information disorder.

[8] The methodology of the "hibrid.info" platform for combating information disorder can be found here: <https://hibrid.info/metodologgia/>

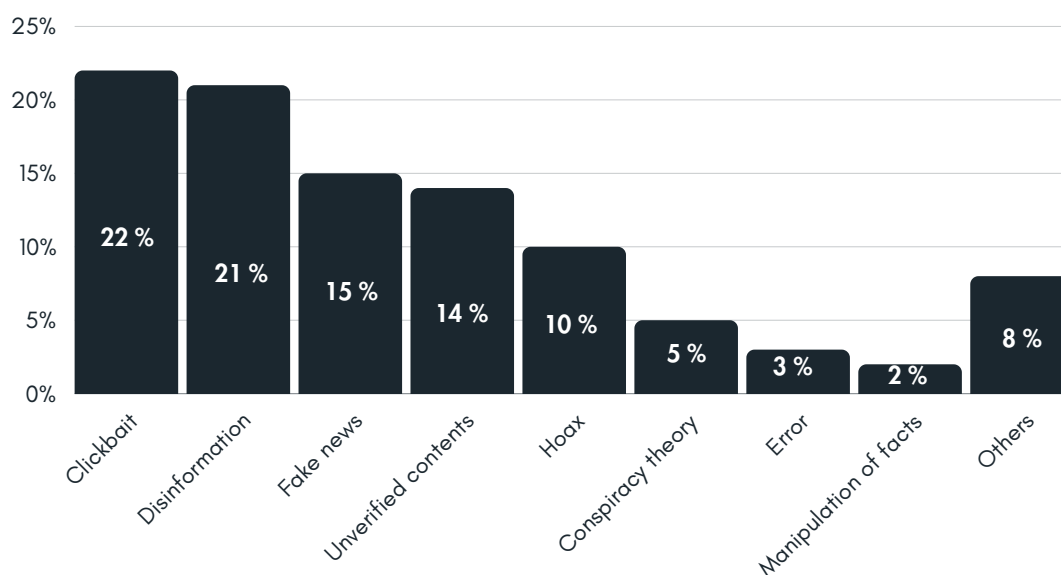


Figure 1: Misleading publications by evaluation categories of information disorder (July 2023 - June 2024)

Analysis of misleading articles in the "Clickbait" category

Within the "Clickbait" evaluation category, as in the previous monitoring period, the majority of misleading articles published and shared during this annual period are in the fields of crime and social issues. These articles are designed to spark readers' curiosity and encourage clicks on such publications. These articles mainly address the topics of tragic cases, deaths, climate conditions, earthquakes, food products, cases of violence, accidents, prices and other social or crime-related topics. Moreover, in this period, 45% of the "Clickbait" publications are about crime and another 23% about social topics.

However, in other fields there have been far fewer misleading articles, such as politics, security, sports, etc., considering that crime and social issues make up for about 68% of misleading publications in

the 'Clickbait' category, leaving behind other thematic fields as shown in Figure 2.

From the monitoring of the 'hibrid.info' platform, it is observed that all misleading articles in this category are published in Albanian primarily by real media and to a lesser extent by various other publishers. Real media have published the most articles with such content, accounting for 83% of the total, while other publishers significantly less, such as various publishers on Facebook at 11% and on suspicious portals at 6%. This confirms the trend analyzed in previous monitoring reports of 'hibrid.info' that the media and publishers in Albanian language who publish misleading articles in 'Clickbait' category need to gain more audience in the online format.[9]

[9] Avdiu, P., & Osmani, S. (2023). *Behind the Screens: Annual report on the state of information disorder*, p. 20. Pristina: ADS/hibrid.info.

According to monitoring data, the misleading content published in the topics and fields of "Clickbait" by the real media does not necessarily aim to misinform. Moreover, they distribute such articles due to the readers' curiosity to browse such

articles, which influences an increase in readership and clicks on social media. [10] This issue is also addressed in subsequent sections of the report in the most frequent fields and topics of misinformation.

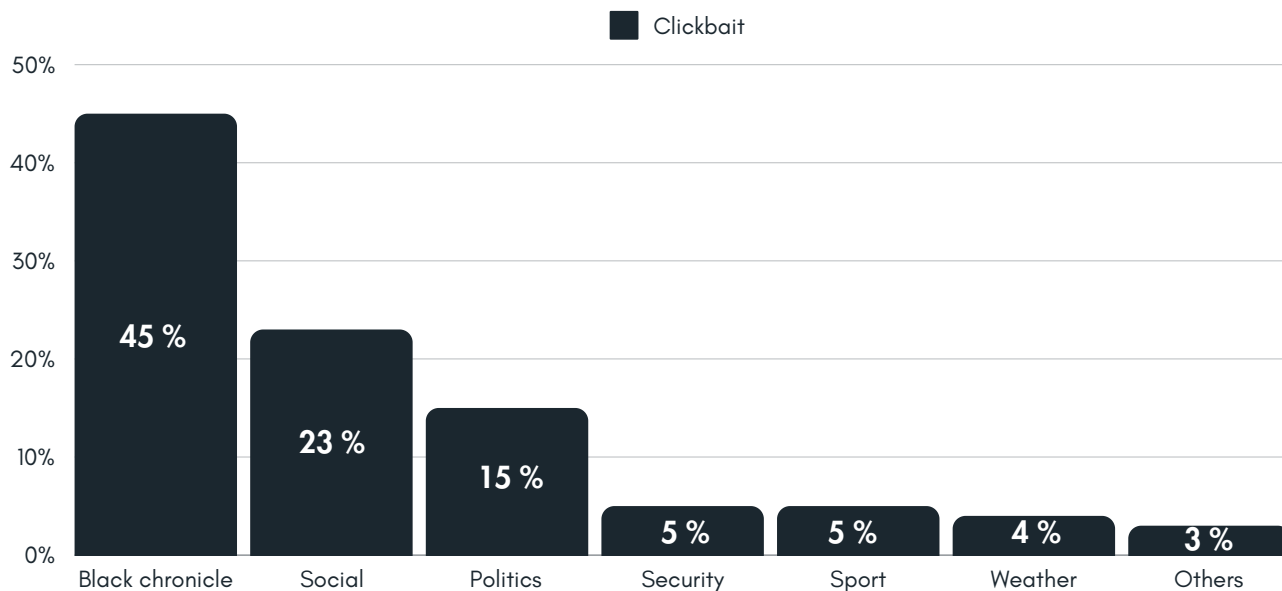


Figure 2: Thematic areas with the most misinformation in the "Clickbait" category (July 2023 - June 2024)

Analysis of Misleading Articles in the "Disinformation" Category

As for misleading articles evaluated as disinformation, most have addressed political and security issues, depending on the dynamics of events in these two fields. The majority of disinformation has been published in Albanian, accounting for 85%. Among these, Albanian language publishers on social media have published the most disinformation (61%), followed by real media (12%) and suspicious media (12%). Meanwhile, the remaining disinformation, or 14%, has been published in Serbian, primarily by real media in Serbian (12%) and 2% by social media publishers in Serbian. In this case, it

should be explained that unlike misleading publications in Albanian, where all types of publishers are monitored (real media, social media publishers, and suspicious media), monitoring of Serbian-language publications focuses particularly on real media in Serbian, and in some cases, social media publishers who distribute articles about Kosovo in Serbian are also monitored. These publishers create and distribute misleading content related to developments in Kosovo in the fields of politics and security.

[10] Ibid.

A key characteristic of disinformation published during this period is that the overwhelming majority of it has been created and disseminated by various publishers on social media. In this case, 64% of the disinformation has been created by social media publishers (75% on Facebook and 25% on TikTok). Nearly all of these, or 95%, have been published in Albanian, while the remaining 5% have been published in other languages (Serbian and English) on Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and Telegram. Meanwhile, only 24% of the disinformation has been published by real media, with 51% in Albanian and 49% in Serbian. On the other hand, suspicious media have published significantly fewer instances of disinformation, accounting for 12%.

Based on the monitoring data, disinformation has predominantly been published and disseminated in the field of security (37%) and politics (30%) during this annual period (see Figure 3). This means that 2/3, or 67%, of the articles assessed as disinformation are directly related to security and political events, leaving behind other areas such as social issues (17%), sports (6%), black chronicle (5%), and others. These data confirm the preliminary analyses by the "hibrid.info" platform that misleading publications in the fields of security and politics contribute to the increase of disinformation as a category of informational disruption.[12] In contrast, misleading articles with content related to black chronicle and social issues tend to boost publications in the "Clickbait" category, as observed during the review of this disinformation evaluation category. This explains the reasons for the

frequent fluctuations between the "Clickbait" and "Disinformation" categories during the months of this annual period (July 2023 – June 2024), depending on the reporting by various media and publishers.

Publishers in the Albanian language have predominantly distributed disinformation about security issues and unlike the previous period, they have focused more on the conflict between Israel and Hamas rather than on events in and around Kosovo. Disinformation about this conflict, which is unrelated to Kosovo but pertains to an international event, has been published by social media publishers (all of which have been distributed on Facebook). These publications are considered pro-Islamic and are in the Albanian language. These publications contain various forms of disinformation about the Israel-Hamas conflict, including images generated by artificial intelligence and video material that does not accurately represent the situation in the conflict. This is one of the rare instances where there is more disinformation in the field of security about a foreign conflict, rather than specifically focusing on the dynamics of security events in Kosovo. After the conflict between Israel and Hamas, disinformation in Albanian in the field of security was primarily related to the northern part of Kosovo, focusing on the attack by a group of terrorists in the village Banjska in Zveçan against members of the Kosovo Police in September 2023, explosions in the north. After the north there was a domination of misleading reports regarding the war in Ukraine and the arming of Kosovo Security Force, etc. After security issues, Albanian-language

[12] Ibid., pg. 18-19.

publishers have also spread disinformation about political matters. Leading these are publications about the Israel-Hamas conflict, followed by reports on the fall of Prime Minister Kurti's government, the situation in northern Kosovo, the Central Bank of Kosovo's decision to ban the Serbian dinar, and measures taken by the European Union against Kosovo, among other topics. Other forms of disinformation in Albanian, although significantly fewer compared to security and political issues, pertain to social issues, sports, black chronicle, healthcare, and other thematic area

Even the disinformation created and distributed by publishers in the Serbian language are mainly about political and security issues, but which are directly related to developments in Kosovo in these two areas. Almost all disinformation in Serbian-language is published by real media, and only a small, not to say negligible, portion is published on social media by Serbian-language publishers.

The disinformation published in Serbian language are mainly about the north of Kosovo for the attack in Banjska and the claims of Serbian language media that the Kosovo Police is terrorizing the Serbs in the northern municipalities of Kosovo. These publishers have also distributed other disinformation about the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, about the intervention of NATO in 1999, the riots of March 2004 in Kosovo, municipalities with a Serbian majority, etc. These misleading publications in Serbian with disinformation content are part of Serbian narratives from Serbian media aimed at misinforming about developments in Kosovo, without relying on accuracy or verification of facts and information sources, with the intent of disinforming about events in and around Kosovo.[13] According to media experts in Kosovo, the Serbian narrative towards Kosovo is similar to or copies the Russian narrative towards Ukraine, aiming to label Kosovo as a "failed state". This narrative is utilized by the media closely aligned with Serbian government to create and spread such disinformation against Kosovo.[14]

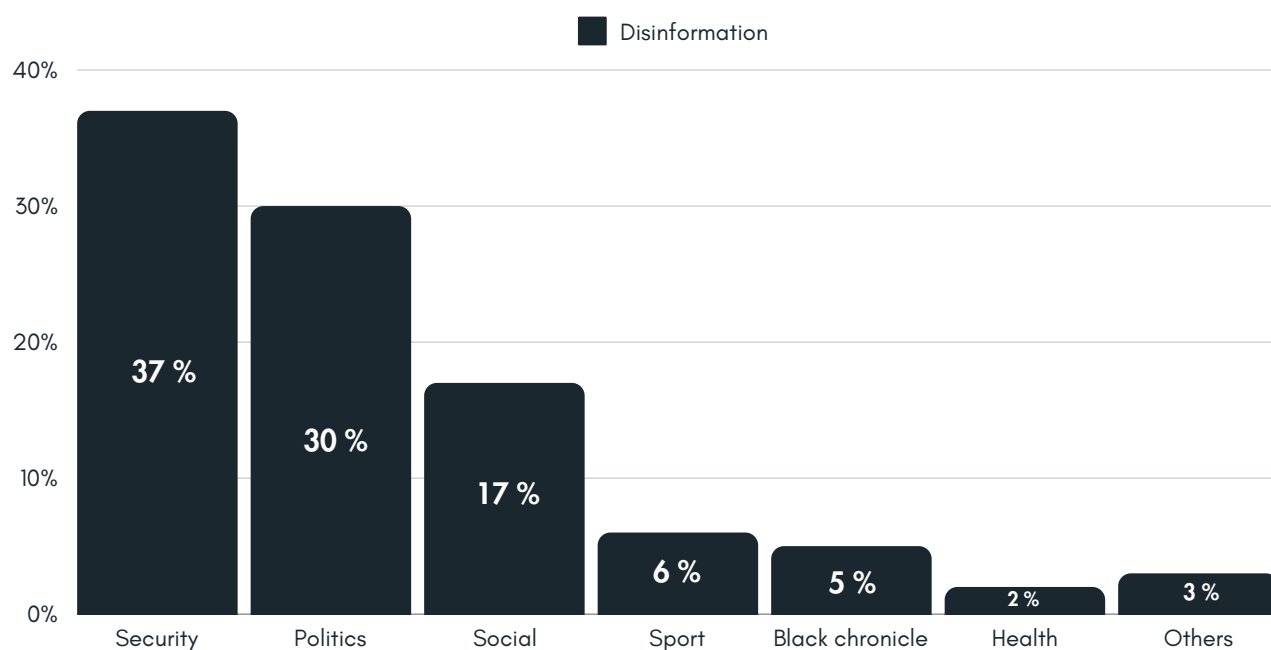


Figure 3: The thematic areas with the most misinformation in the "Disinformation" category (July 2023 - June 2024)

[13] Ibid,

[14] The focus group with media experts and specialists organized by "hibrid.info" Pristina, 6 June 2024.



2. Topics used to create and distribute misinforming content

Monitoring data shows that despite the dynamics of political and security events in Kosovo during the months of 2023 and 2024, with a particular focus on northern Kosovo (Banjska case, referendum in northern municipalities of Kosovo related to the removal of mayors, etc.), another event outside Kosovo, such as the Israel-Hamas conflict, has prompted Albanian-language publishers to create and distribute the majority of misleading articles during this period. About 10% of published topics are about this conflict in the Middle East as evidenced in Figure 4.

In the second place are tragic cases with misinforming content with 6.5%, which is followed by the north with 6.3% and various misleading reporting regarding the armament of the Kosovo Security Force with 4%.

Other topics on which various publishers have created and distributed misleading articles include credit issuance (3%), death (2%), and other subjects.

The following provides a summary of the main themes monitored during this annual period.

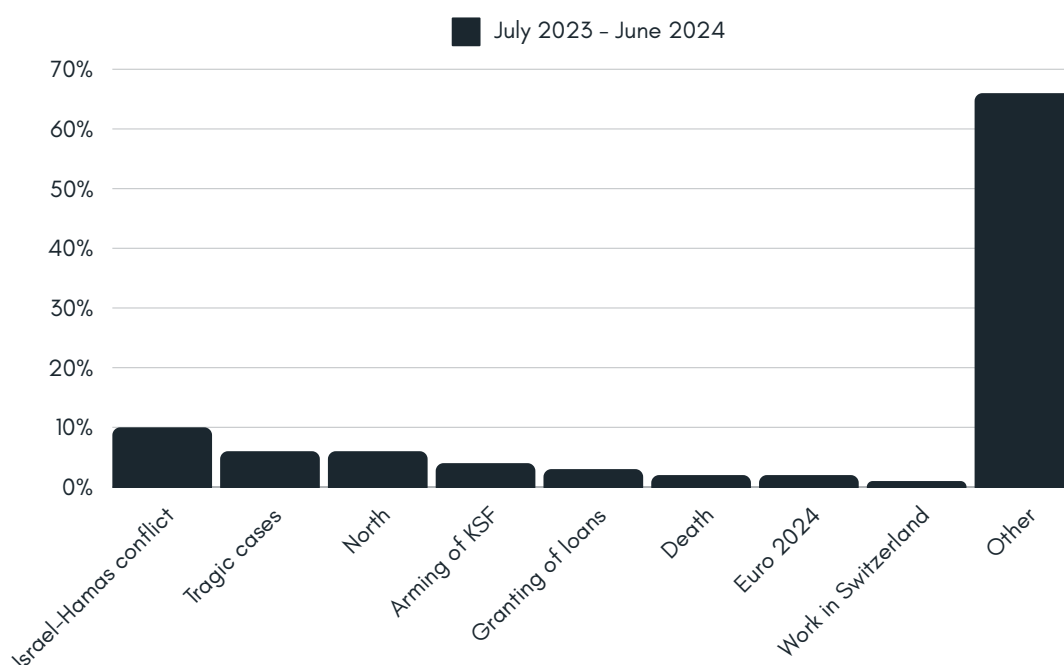


Figure 4: Prevailing themes in misinformation (July 2023 - June 2024)

Israel-Hamas conflict

Almost all content intended for the local audience about the Israel-Hamas conflict that was reviewed/monitored has been published in Albanian (98%), with only two articles in foreign languages (one in English and one in Serbian), making up for about 2%. Also, nearly all of these misleading publications have been created and distributed by Albanian-language publishers on social media (around 96%), more precisely vast majority were published on Facebook (91%), with a smaller portion on TikTok (5%). The largest number of such publications appeared during the months of October to December 2023 (81%). However, there were also publications in the following months from anuary to May 2024, though at a lower

J percentage (19%). Most of this misinformation about the Israel-Hamas conflict has been published and shared on Facebook by various pages and accounts in Albanian, whose publications are considered pro-Islamic. These publications have largely been assessed as unverified content, disinformation, and fake news. They mostly pertain to the fields of security (63%), social issues (23%), and politics (14%). The "hibrid.info" platform has found that this is the first international conflict where artificial intelligence has been used to create images claiming to depict the state of the Israel-Hamas conflict, which have been assessed as misleading content.[15]

Israel-Hamas conflict	Evaluation category		Field		Type of publisher		Social media		Language	
	Unverified content	47%	Security	63%	Social media	96%	Facebook	91%	Albanian	98%
	Disinformation	30%	Social	23%	Real media	3%	TikTok	5%	English	1%
	Fake news	10%	Politics	14%	Suspicious media	1%			Serbian	1%
	Other	13%								

Figure 5: The ration of the Israel-Hamas conflict topic in various categories of information disorder (July 2023 - June 2024)

[15] The focus group with media experts and specialists organized by "hibrid.info" Pristina, 6 June 2024.

Tragic cases

All misinforming content on tragic cases are published in Albanian language. Real media have published most of the articles with such misinforming content (84%), followed by publishers on social media with 14% and suspicious media, 2%. Vast

majority of tragic cases fall in the "clickbait" category in the black chronicle section and misinformation on this topic addresses various deaths and murders, giving tragic tone to those cases.

Tragic cases	Evaluation category		Field		Type of publisher		Social media		Language	
	Clickbait	83%	Black chronicle	96%	Real media	84%	Facebook	10%	Albanian	100%
	Disinformation	6%	Security	2%	Social media	14%	TikTok	4%		
	Error	4%	Social	2%	Suspicious media	2%				
	Other	7%								

Figure 6: The ratio of tragic cases theme in various categories of information disorder (July 2023 - June 2024)

North

After the tragic cases, in third place are the misleading articles on issues of northern Kosovo (6.3%), with a very narrow percentage difference from the tragic cases (6.5%) of 0.2%. This is the first time that the topic of northern Kosovo does not prevail in terms of misinformation content since the fact-checking platform "hibrid.info" started monitoring misinformation in Kosovo in July 2022. The majority of misleading content on this topic is published by social media outlets at 62%, traditional media at 32%, and suspicious media at 6%. Of these, the

majority are published in Albanian at 74%, primarily by publishers operating in the Albanian language on social media, totaling 52%. Among these, Facebook dominates with 32% and TikTok with 18%, while other social media, such as Telegram, account for 2%. While, monitoring of traditional media in the Albanian language shows that they have published 16% of the misleading articles about the north, and suspicious media have published 6%. Articles in the Albanian language about the north are primarily focused on security, related to

developments over the past twelve months (July 2023 – June 2024) in the northern municipalities of Kosovo. These articles are categorized as disinformation, unverified content, and fake news. Meanwhile, the remaining 24% of the misinformation was published in Serbian, with 16% appearing in traditional Serbian-language media and 8% by publishers on social media (mainly on Telegram). Publications about the north in Serbian language have been created

and disseminated in the field of security evaluated as disinformation and conspiracy theories about the Serbian terrorist attack in Banjska, unsubstantiated claims that Serbs in the northern municipalities of Kosovo are being attacked, and distortions of facts against the Kosovo Police, etc. Meanwhile, about 2% of the misinformation publications about the North were distributed in English by publishers on social media.

North	Evaluation category		Field		Type of publisher		Social media		Language	
	Disinformation	38%	Security	84%	Social media	62%	Facebook	34%	Albanian	74%
	Unverified contents	22%	Politics	12%	Real media	32%	TikTok	18%	Serbian	24%
	Fake news	14%	Social	4%	Suspicious media	6%	Telegram	8%	English	2%
	Other	26%					X (formerly-Twitter)	2%		

Figure 7: The ratio of the Kosovo north theme in various categories of information disorder (July 2023 - June 2024)

Arming of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF)

The issue of arming the KSF attracted public and media attention following the purchase of Bayraktar TB-2 drones by Kosovo institutions from Turkey[16] in the second half of 2023, and Kosovo's request to the USA for Javelin anti-tank

missiles in January 2024.[17] For this reason, it has contributed to the increase in misleading content during this period, according to the monitoring findings from "hibrid.info." All misinforming articles about the armament of the KSF have been

[16] Koha.net. (16 July 2023). [Kosovo buys Bayraktar drones.](#)

[17] Radio Free Europe. (11 January 2024). [US DOS: The value of the anti-tank missiles that Kosovo wants to buy is 75 million dollars.](#)

published in the Albanian language. Almost all of them are created and distributed by social media publishers in the Albanian language with about 94% and only 6% by real media, of which Misleading articles distributed by various accounts in Albanian on TikTok are the most prevalent (61%), followed by Facebook pages (31%) and YouTube

channels (3%). This is an important finding of this monitoring that shows that the most misinforming articles about the KSF were published on TikTok during this period of the year. Also, all articles on this topic are in the field of security and about 2/3 or 67% of them are rated as fake news, followed by misinformation, unverified content, etc.

The arming of KSF	Evaluation category		Field		Type of publisher		Social media		Language	
	Fake news	67%	Security	100%	Social media	94%	TikTok	61%	Albanian	100%
	Disinformation	14%			Real media	6%	Facebook	31%		
	Unverified contents	14 %					Youtube	3%		
	Others	6%								

Figure 8: The ratio of the KSF armament theme in various categories of information disorder (July 2023 - June 2024)



3. Misinformation fields

During this annual monitoring period of misinformation-based articles, various publishers created and distributed the most misleading content in the field of security at 27%. Following this are misinformation on social issues at 23%, politics at 22%, crime at 14%, and other thematic areas such as sports, weather, economy, and health also at 14%.

However, it can be said that security and politics have dominated the most during this period, making up 49% together compared to crime and social issues, which account for about 37% of all misleading articles for the period July 2023 – June 2024.

Regarding the field of security, Albanian-language publishers have produced the most misinformation at 88%. Among these, social media publishers account for 72%, with the most misleading content related to security topics (primarily Facebook and TikTok pages and accounts), followed by traditional media at 14% and dubious media at 2%. Meanwhile, 11% of all security-related publications were in Serbian, with 8% coming from traditional Serbian-language media and 3% from Serbian social media publishers. The monitoring focus on Serbian-language publications was more on traditional media than social media. Additionally, only 1% of the monitored security

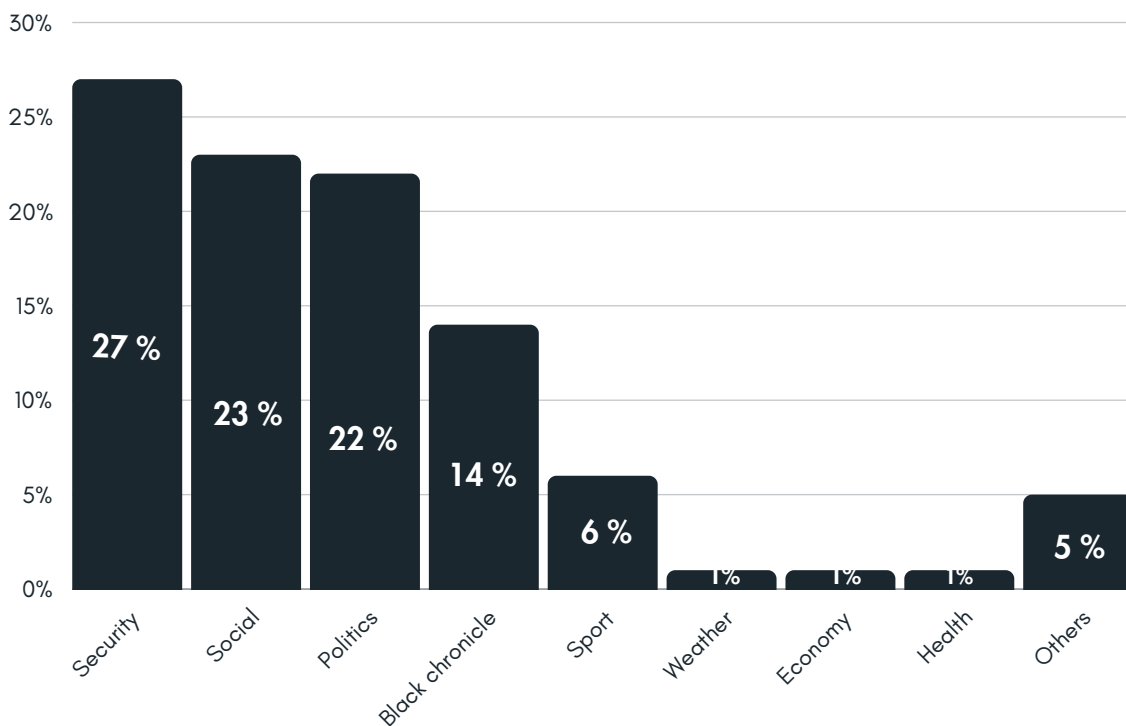


Figure 9: Top fields of misinformation (July 2023 - June 2024)

publications were created by social media publishers in English. It seems that the main reason the field of security has dominated during this period is due to the abundance of misleading publications about the Israel-Hamas conflict from Albanian-language social media publishers. This is followed by misinformation about northern Kosovo, the arming of the Kosovo Security Force, the war in Ukraine, the Iranian attack on Israel, and other topics. This implies that publishers of misleading content in Albanian, in the field of security, are not limiting themselves to distorting news solely about internal security developments in Kosovo. They are also covering other topics, such as conflicts in the Middle East and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which are unrelated to Kosovo. The vast majority of misinformation in the field of security is created and distributed by publishers on Albanian social media. Albanian-language publications in the field of security have been most frequently classified as disinformation, fake news, and unverified content. Meanwhile, publications in Serbian have been primarily released by traditional Serbian-language media, often in the form of conspiracy theories and misinformation related to security issues in northern Kosovo, Serbian-majority settlements in Kosovo, and similar topics.

Misinformative publications on social issues are primarily created in Albanian, with most (59%) distributed by publishers on social media, mainly on Facebook and TikTok. The remainder is spread through traditional media (30%) and dubious media (11%). Similar to the security field, the conflict between Israel and Hamas has been the most discussed topic in the social sphere during this period, with various forms of misinformation circulating about

it. This is followed by misleading articles about loans, jobs in Switzerland, health products, prize games, the price of bread, and similar topics. Misinforming content with social themes has mostly been categorized as "Fraud" and "Clickbait," with smaller amounts classified as "Disinformation," "Unverified content," and other categories.

Among the published misleading articles in the political field, those concerning the Israel-Hamas conflict, developments in northern Kosovo, and the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia have been the most prevalent. Similar to disinformation in the field of security, disinformation and fake news are the most dominant categories of information disorder in politics, while "clickbait" and fraud articles are less common. The vast majority of misinformation in the political field is published in Albanian (83%) with 48% coming from social media publishers, 33% from traditional media, and 2% from dubious media operating in Albanian. Misinformative publications in Albanian in the political field cover topics like the Israel-Hamas conflict, Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, the north, overthrow of Kurti Government, etc. Meanwhile, about 16% of misinformation publications on political issues were in Serbian, with 14% published by traditional media and 2% by social media publishers operating in Serbian. Misinforming content in Serbian is related to the political situation in Kosovo, including topics such as the north, Serbian-majority settlements and municipalities, Serbian community, etc. Compared to the other areas discussed above, where social media publishers have published the most misleading articles on security and social topics, in the political field there was an

almost equal number of publications by social media publishers (50%) and real media (48%), though there is a slight domination of publications on the social media compared to real media.

Regarding black chronicle, all disinformation publications in this area have been in Albanian. The majority are categorized as "clickbait," with significantly smaller percentages classified as fake news, misinformation, and

unverified content. Most misinformation articles in the black chronicle focus on reports of tragic cases, deaths, murders, accidents, and similar events. The key difference from other thematic areas is that the majority of misleading articles about the black chronicle were published by traditional Albanian-language media (71%), with social media publishers contributing about 24% and suspicious media making up 5%.

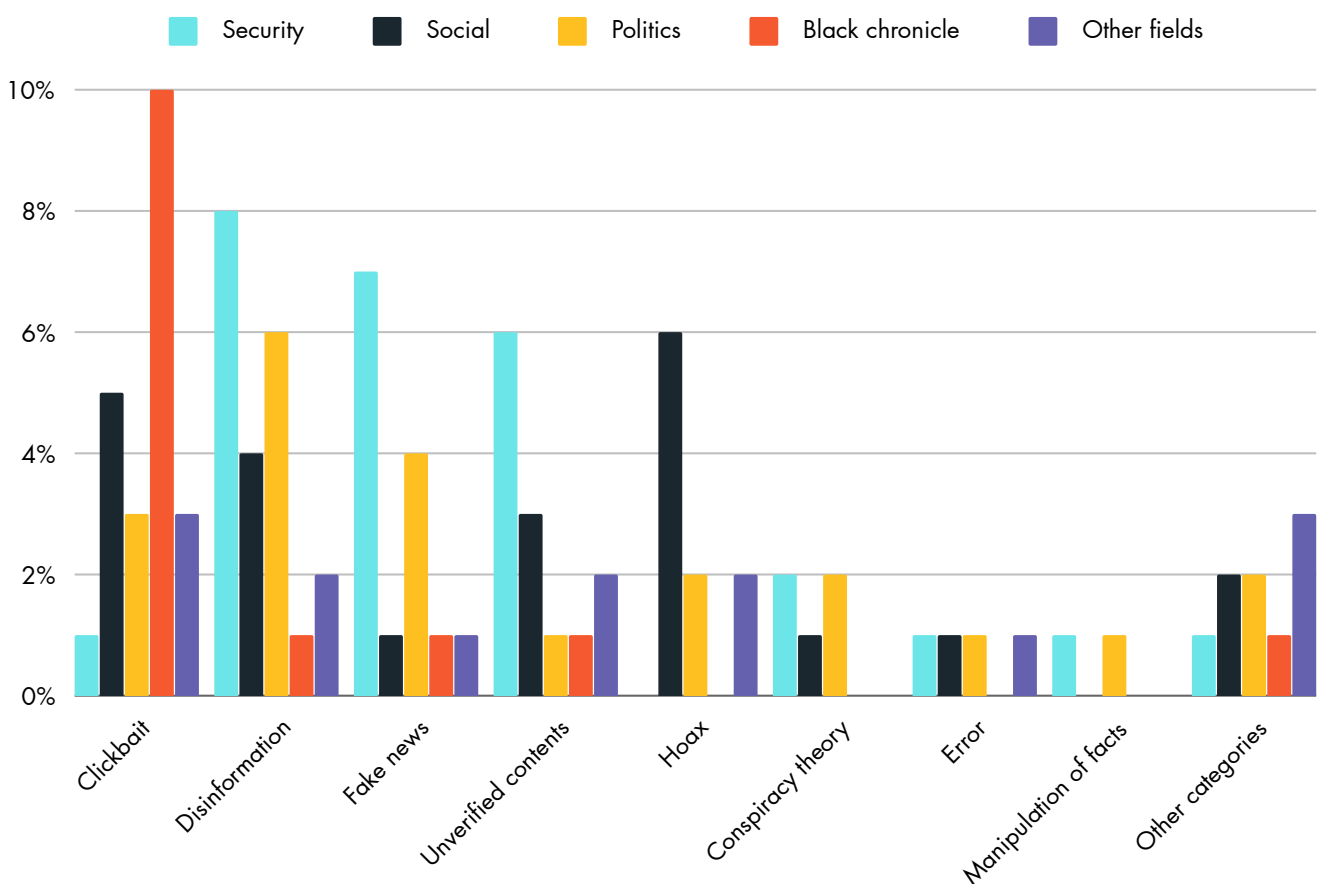


Figure 10: Assessment of disinformation articles based on evaluation categories of information disorder across thematic areas (July 2023 - June 2024)

4. Types of Publishers of Misinformation

A key finding of this report is the noticeable trend during the monitoring period (July 2023 - June 2024) where various publishers have increasingly created and distributed misleading articles on social media compared to traditional or suspicious media. In this case, there has been a significant increase in the publication of misinformation on social media, particularly from various pages, accounts, and publishers in Albanian, primarily on Facebook and TikTok. Additionally, there is a noticeable decrease in misinforming content in traditional and suspicious media, which is attributed to the increase of such publications by social media publishers.

Except for the three months of the monitoring period—July 2023, August 2023, and February 2024—when there were more misinformation publications in traditional media, in all other months, social media publishers in Albanian consistently published more misinformation articles. Thus, 56% of misinformation publications were on social media, 39% in traditional media, and only 5% in suspicious media.

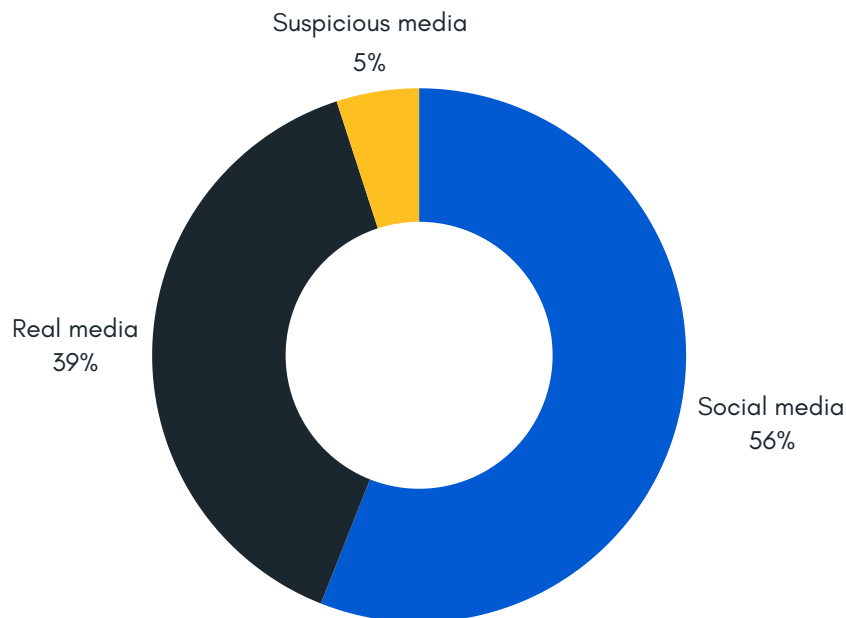


Figure 11: Types of publishers disseminating misinforming articles (July 2023 - June 2024)

The data in the following figure illustrate the evaluation categories of information disorder in which misinforming content was most prevalent. Social media publishers have primarily focused on creating and distributing misinformation in the categories of disinformation and fake news (14% each), along with unverified

content (11%) and fraud (10%). In contrast, traditional media have published the most disinformation in the "clickbait" category, accounting for 18%, while suspicious media primarily spread misinformation (3%). However, suspicious media have published significantly less compared to social media and traditional media.

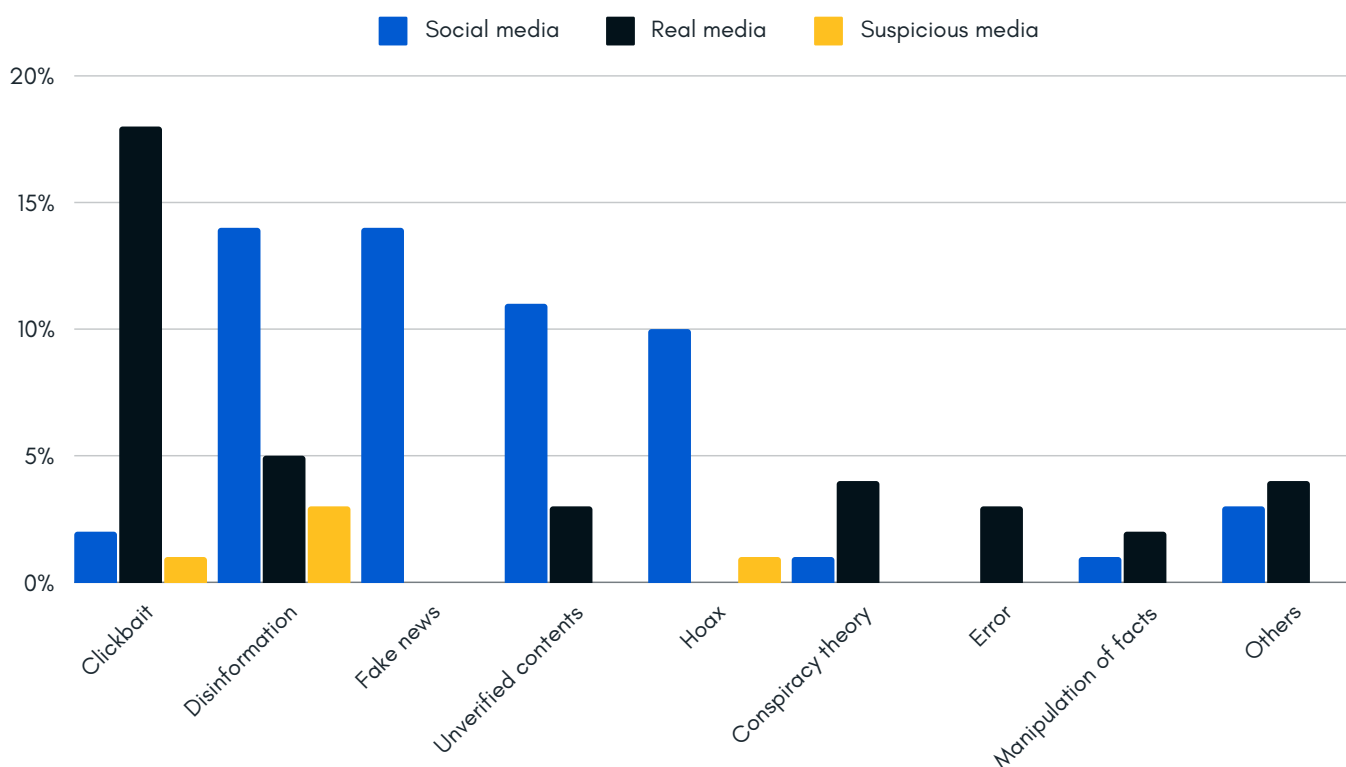


Figure 12: Distribution of misinformation articles by publishers based on categories of information disorder (July 2023 - June 2024)

Monitoring by the "hibrid.info" platform over this one-year period of information disorder in Kosovo has revealed that social media publishers—nearly all of whom publish in Albanian (98%)—have primarily disseminated misinformative articles in the field of security (20%), followed by social issues (14%) and politics (11%). However, it is observed that the focus of these

publishers was on the areas of security and politics, as these two fields are interconnected. Real media have published the most misinformation about politics (11%) and black chronicles (10%), followed by social topics (7%) and security (6%). Meanwhile, suspicious media have primarily distributed misinformative articles on social issues (2%).

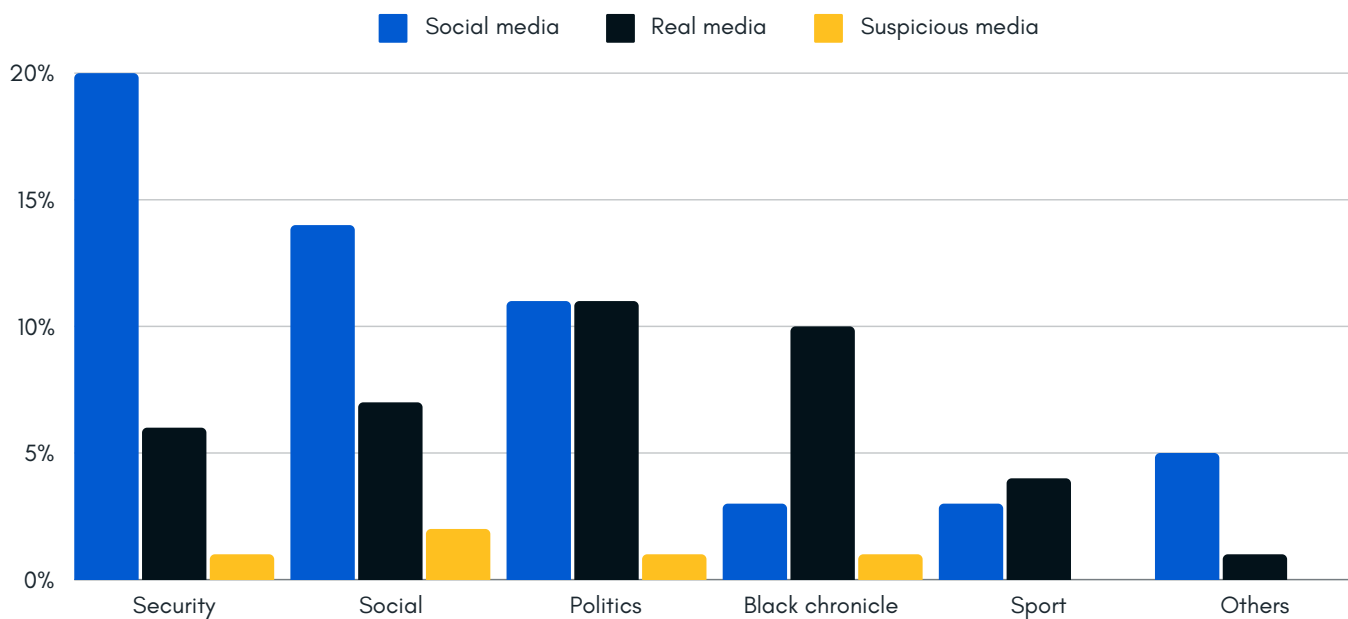


Figure 13: Distribution of misinformation articles by publishers by subject area (July 2023 - June 2024)

During this annual period, publishers in Albanian have published the vast majority of misinformative articles. Approximately 91% of the publications were created and distributed by various Albanian-language publishers: 54% by social media

publishers, 32% by traditional media, and 5% by suspicious portals. Meanwhile, about 8% of the publications are in Serbian, mainly from traditional media, and 1% are in English from social media publishers.

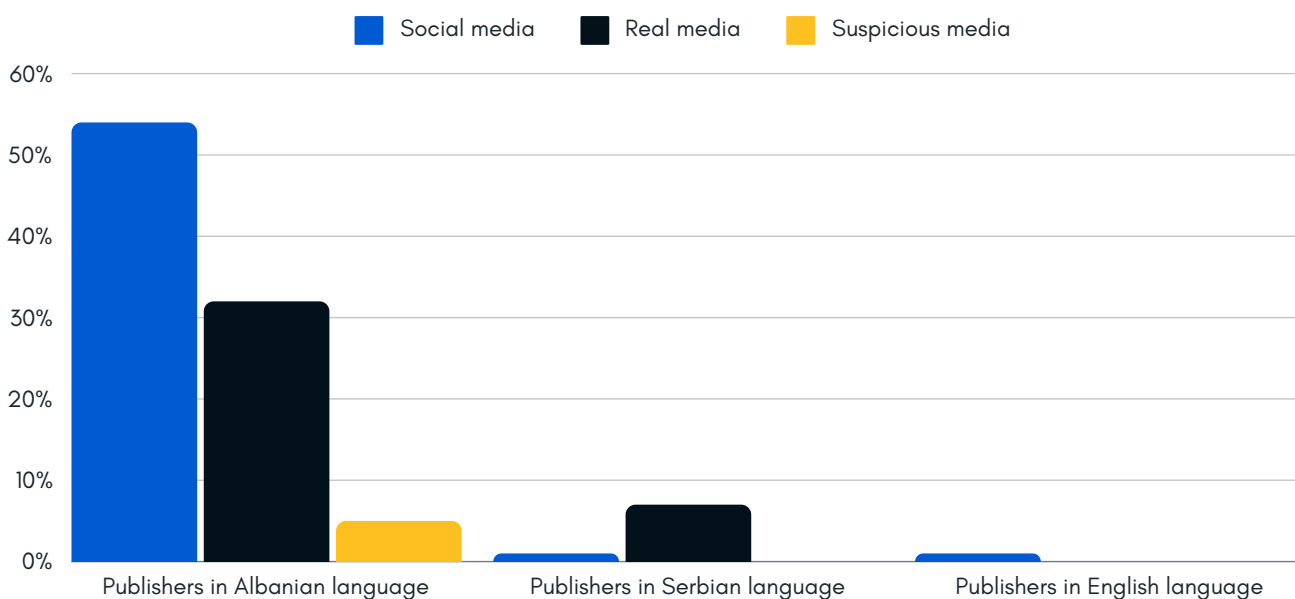


Figure 14: Misinformation publications from all publishers in Albanian, Serbian, and other languages (July 2023 - June 2024)



5. Types of social media

During this period of monitoring misinformation in Kosovo, there has been an increasing trend of misleading articles in Albanian on social media, as highlighted in the previous section. The work methodology of the "hibrid.info" platform for combating information disorder clearly defines the criteria for monitoring misleading content and methods for selecting articles with misleading content, as follows: i) the significance of the content, with a focus on the importance of information and involvement of individuals in the distributed information, ii) potential impact the content may have on the audience due to political and socio-economic importance, iii) virality or distribution flow of the content, including in traditional media, suspicious portals, and social media.[18] Based on these methodological criteria for selecting

misleading content, the monitored misinformation on various topics was predominantly published on social media, accounting for more than half (56%) of the total, mainly from Facebook and TikTok pages and accounts operating in Albanian language, but also appeared on other social media platforms.

During this annual period, various publishers on Facebook, operating in Albanian, have published the majority of misinformative articles—accounting for 38% of the total—covering not only topics related to Kosovo but also international developments. In second place are misleading publications on TikTok, with 14%, while other social media platforms have significantly lower percentages, at 4% (Telegram, X, YouTube, Instagram, and Reddit).

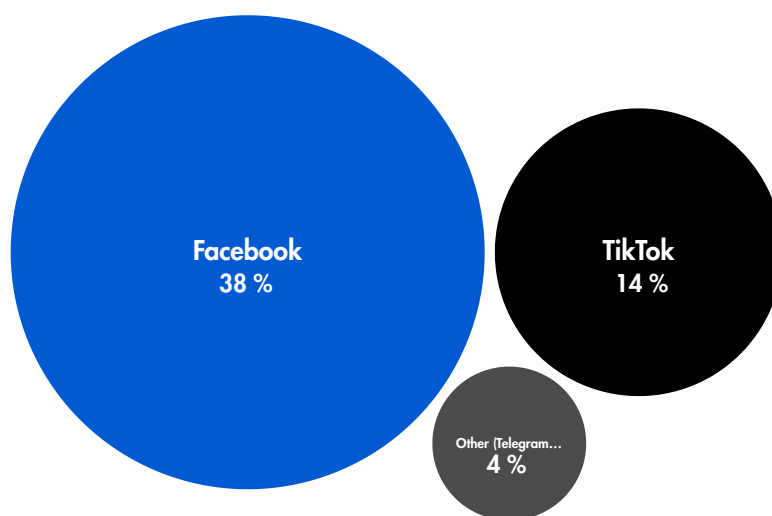


Figure 15: Misleading publications on the social media (July 2023 - June 2024)

[18] See the methodology of the "hibrid.info" platform for the fight against information disorder: <https://hibrid.info/metodologjia/>

5.1. Types of social media publishers

The analysis of data on which publishers have created and distributed the most misinformation on social media provides a more detailed overview, allowing for a clearer understanding of the misinformation trends in Kosovo. The "hibrid.info" platform monitors various publishers that spread misinformative content, including pages, accounts, profiles, media outlets, official pages, and various channels managed by social media users.

Figure 16 shows that various Facebook pages have published the most misinformation content during this period.

About 29% of monitored misinformative articles were published by Facebook pages, while other publishers on this social media platform have published to a lesser extent. About 29% of monitored misleading articles were published by Facebook pages, while other publishers in this social media have published, but in a smaller percentage. In second place are various TikTok accounts that, according to the data, have published 14% of the misinformation articles monitored during this annual period. Meanwhile, other social media platforms such as Telegram, X, YouTube, Instagram, and Reddit have published significantly less misinformation related to Kosovo.

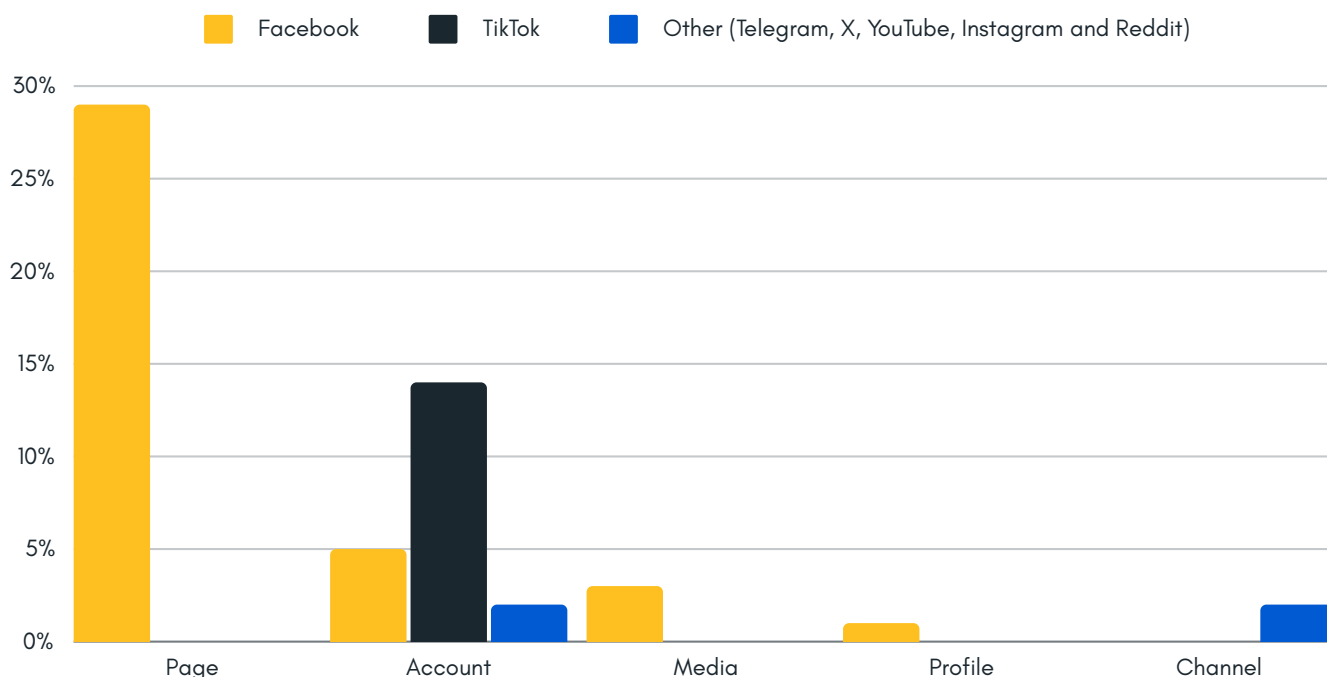


Figure 16: Publishers of misinformation articles by various publishers on the social media (July 2023 - June 2024)

Social media publishers have primarily published fake news and disinformation, each accounting for 14%, followed by unverified content at 10%, along with other categories of information disorder. When breaking down the categories of

misinformation by social media platform, it is observed that Facebook publishers have focused on misinformation and unverified content, while TikTok has predominantly published fake news.

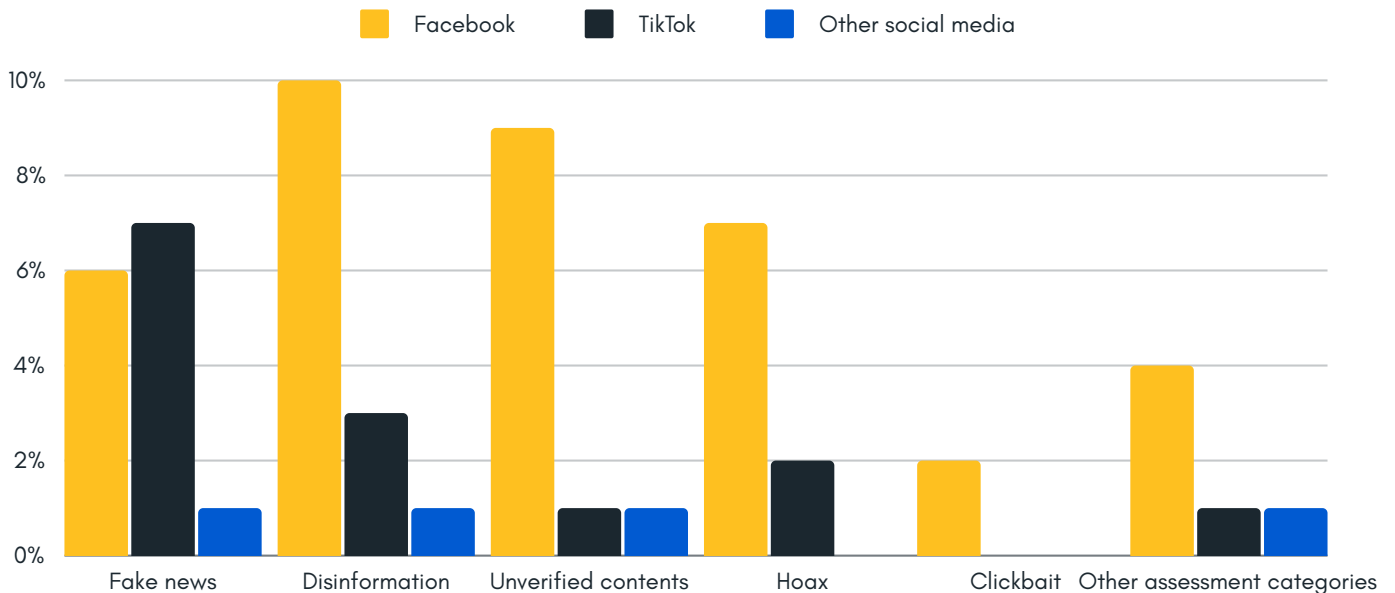


Figure 17: Publications of misinformation articles on social media by evaluation categories of information disorder (July 2023 - June 2024)

The analysis of data on the areas and topics most addressed by publishers on social media throughout this annual period shows that the security field has been the primary focus of these publishers, followed by social and political fields. In this case, Facebook was the primary platform for creating and distributing misleading content related to security events and social issues, while TikTok predominantly featured security-related topics. However, TikTok had significantly fewer publications compared to Facebook. The most important finding from the monitoring for

this period regarding social media is that misleading content related to the Israel-Hamas conflict was almost exclusively published by Albanian-language publishers on social media. According to the data, 96% of content related to this foreign conflict was published on social media, specifically 91% on Facebook and 5% on TikTok, with the remaining content appearing in traditional media (3%) and suspicious media (1%). The main reasons for monitoring misleading articles on the Israel-Hamas conflict are that content on this topic has dominated over all other

subjects and has had a significant impact, especially on social media as a topic that has driven clicks and numerous comments on Facebook and TikTok, in which disinformation articles on the conflict between Israel and Hamas have been

published. For other topics, the situation in northern Kosovo and the arming of the Kosovo Security Force are the most frequently discussed subjects by social media publishers, following the Israel-Hamas conflict.

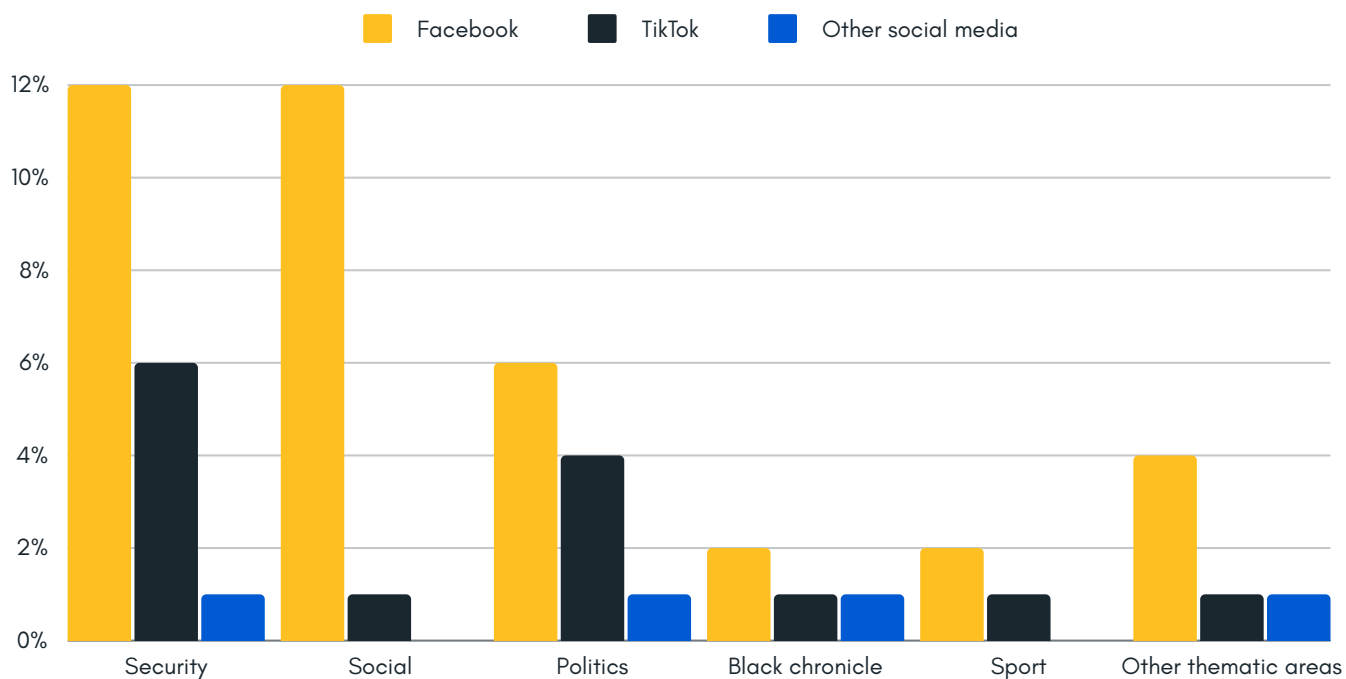


Figure 18: Publications of misinformation articles on social media by subject area (July 2023 - June 2024)

6. The Most Mentioned Institutions and Personalities



During this annual period of monitoring the state of information disorder in Kosovo, security institutions have been the most talked-about by publishers of misleading articles related to the dynamics of security and political developments in Kosovo.

Out of a total of 818 misinforming articles monitored by “hibrid.info” during this period, 129, or 16%, have focused on various Kosovo and foreign institutions and organizations related to developments in Kosovo. Out of this number of misleading content (129) that mentioned institutions, Kosovo Security Force was mentioned the most, accounting for 33% of misleading articles related to its arming, purchase of new equipment for the KSF, funding for KSF, and other topics related to this security institution. Nearly all articles about the KSF are published in Albanian, accounting for about 95%, while the remaining 4% are in other languages, that is in English and Serbian. According to monitoring data, about 90% of misleading content discussing the KSF was distributed in Albanian by various publishers on social media, primarily from TikTok accounts (50%), Facebook pages and media (45%), and from accounts and channels on other social media platforms (Reddit and YouTube).

The second most talked about institution is the Kosovo Police with 17% of misinformative publications related to developments in the north of Kosovo, police salaries, etc. Most of the misleading articles about the Kosovo Police were published in Albanian by social media publishers, totaling 68%, primarily from Facebook pages, media, profiles, and TikTok accounts. While the real media in Albanian language had much less misinformative publications about the Kosovo Police (about 9%), the real media in Serbian language, on the other hand, had more publications (about 18%), about Kosovo Police in the context of events in the north of Kosovo.

Other mentioned institutions are Office for Kosovo in the Government of Serbia (10%), KFOR mission in Kosovo (2%), Kosovo Liberation Army (2%), etc.

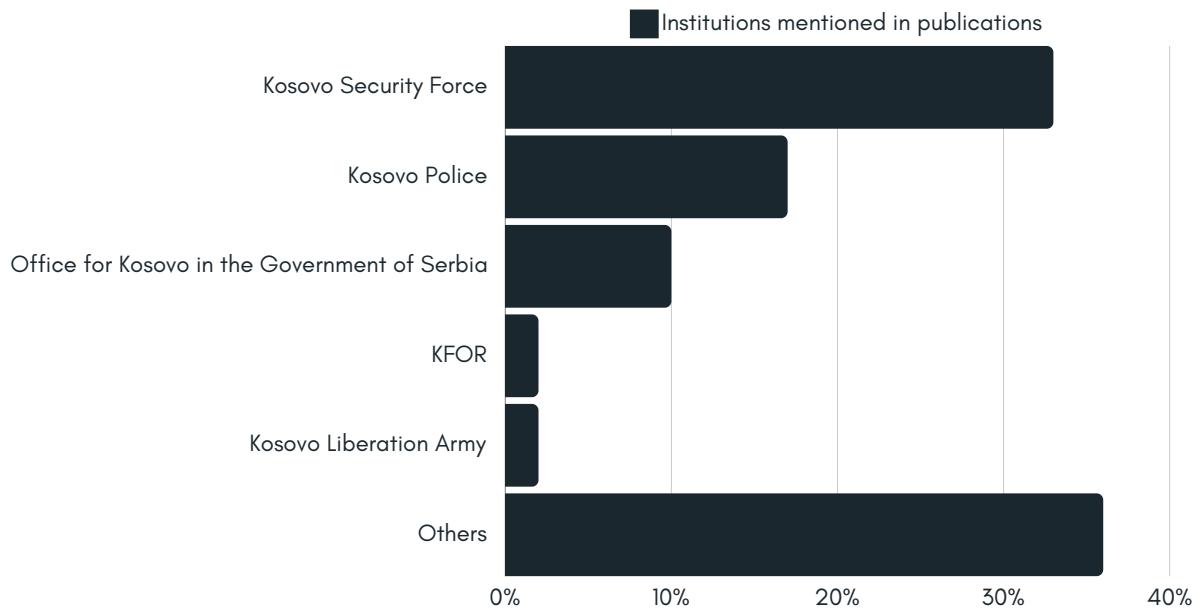


Figure 19: Institutions mentioned in publications with misleading content (July 2023 - June 2024)

As for the slandered personalities, out of a total of 818 misleading content pieces monitored during this period of the year, 248 of them, or 30%, focused on the speculation about public and political figures. During this period, Kosovo's Prime Minister, Albin Kurti, a political figure, has been the most slandered personality compared to other personalities in relation to political and security issues. More than half of misleading publications mentioning Kurti are in Albanian, published by social media (29%) and real media in Albanian (25%). The Albanian-language

disinformation publications about Kurti cover various topics, including the Central Bank of Kosovo's decision to ban the Serbian dinar, arming of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF), Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, population census, and attempts to overthrow the Kurti government, among others. Meanwhile, 46% of the misleading content about Kurti was published in Serbian by mainstream media, covering topics such as the north of Kosovo, settlements with a Serbian majority in Kosovo, threats of war, etc.

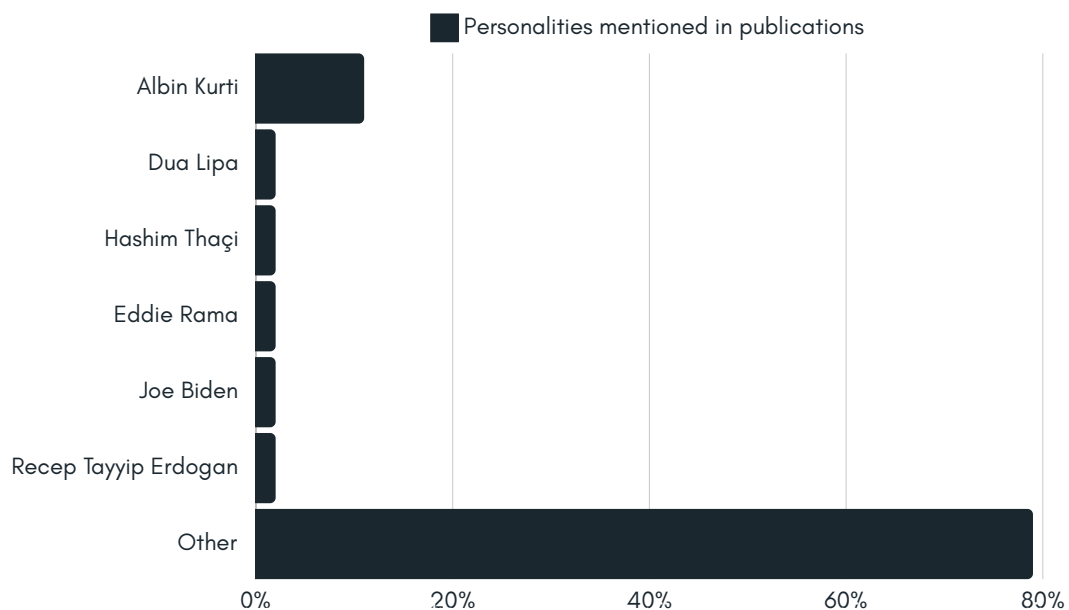


Figure 20: Personalities mentioned in publications with disinformation content (July 2023 - June 2024)



7. Monitoring and evaluation of statements/promises

Since October 2023, the "hibrid.info" platform has been reviewing and assessing the statements of high political and institutional officials, as well as influential public figures. According to "hibrid.info" methodology, the evaluation of statements or promises made by political and institutional officials and public figures is done in the categories of truthfulness, stability, and content of promises, which are explained as follows:

- In the truthfulness category, statements are evaluated based on their adherence to objective facts, the accuracy of which can be determined through objective verification. Statements assessed in this category are rated as "false," "half-true," or "true."
- The stability category evaluates the subjective positions of public officials on issues within their field of work and competencies, as well as their actions in relation to the expressed viewpoints. The assessment of stability is based on a comparison between the current viewpoints and those previously declared publicly by political actors. If the positions on an issue do not change during the public engagement of the monitored individual, such statements are rated as "consistent." Conversely, if there has been a significant change in positions, such statements are rated as "inconsistent."
- The fulfillment or adherence to promises, primarily those made during the election period, is monitored at both the central and local levels throughout the four-year term. In this category, the evaluation is classified as "promise kept" (if it is fulfilled), "promise partially kept" or "promise not kept" (if it is not fulfilled).

During this annual period, the "hibrid.info" platform team has monitored a total of five statements and five promises on various issues. For the relevant monitoring period, there were 4 unfulfilled promises, 3 false statements, 1 half-true statement, 1 unstable statement, and 1 partial promise kept by senior state officials, all of which are summarized based on the data presented in Figure 21.

Albin Kurti	Unkept promise	Politics	Investments in Trepça
Albin Kurti	Unkept promise	Social	Census
Albin Kurti	Unkept promise	Infrastructure	Regulation of the Pristina-Gjilan road
Enver Dugolli	Unkept promise	Social	Law on Salaries
Artane Rizvanolil	Untrue Statement	Social	Miners' salaries
Arben Vitia	Untrue Statement	Social	Infant mortality
Arben Vitia	Untrue Statement	Health	Doctors' salaries
Xhelal Svehla	Half true statement	Security	Police salaries
Përparim Rama	Inconsistent Statement	Infrastructure	The project of connecting Arberija with the Palace of Youth
Alban Zogaj	Partially kept promise	Social	Bicycles in the capital

Figure 21: Monitoring and evaluating statements and promises during the annual period (October 2023 - June 2024)

2.7.1. Unkept promises

Regarding unfulfilled promises, during the monitored period, Prime Minister Albin Kurti made three promises that were not fulfilled. One promise was related to investments in the public enterprise "Trepça" during the 2021 local elections, when Kurti pledged 70 million euros in investments for 2022 and 2023. However, according to "hibrid.info" verification, the actual invested amount in "Trepça" during these two years was 20 million euros. Another unfulfilled promise by the Kosovar Prime Minister concerned the Pristina-Gjilan highway, which was pledged to be completed and inaugurated by 2023. However, it was verified that there was no official announcement regarding the opening of this highway in 2023. Additionally, Prime Minister Kurti had promised that the population census in Kosovo would start on November 1, 2023, based on a government decision and a statement from the Prime Minister himself. However, after fact-checking by hibrid.info, it was confirmed that the decision was not implemented as scheduled, but rather at a later date in 2024.

During a television debate in Kosovo in September 2023, Enver Dugolli, a deputy from the Self-Determination Movement (Lëvizja Vetëvendosje), commented on the issue of non-payment of risk allowances for the Kosovo Police. He stated that there was no agreement between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Internal Affairs to resolve the issue and promised that it would be resolved within two to three days. Despite the deputy's promise, the issue was not resolved by the time Dugolli had indicated.

2.7.2. False statements

In regard to untrue statements, several statements made by ministers of the Kosovo Government on social and health issues were monitored. Health Minister Arben Vitia made two false statements. One related to the infant mortality rate in Kosovo, which he claimed was around 7 per mille, which is considered untrue as it contradicted the reports of international organizations indicating otherwise. The other false statement by Minister Vitia claimed that Kosovar doctors have some of the highest salaries in the Western Balkans. Fact-checking by the "hibrid.info" platform revealed that, compared to Kosovo, only doctors in Serbia have lower salaries.

Regarding salaries, Minister of Economy Artane Rizvanolli stated that the salaries of Trepça miners, according to an agreement reached between the Miners' Union and several deputies, would be paid between the 6th and 10th of each month. However, after verification and investigation, it was found that despite the minister's statement, the salaries for October 2023 had not been paid by November 27, 2023.

2.7.3. Half true statement

After the Serbian terrorist attack in Banjska, Zvečan, Minister of Internal Affairs, Xhelal Sveçla, stated that the average income for members of Kosovo Police's Special Intervention Unit exceeds 2,200 euros for the year 2023. Based on fact-checking by "hibrid.info," this statement was classified as half-true because the current legislation on public officials' salaries does not provide for such a salary for positions within the Police, as claimed by Sveçla. Additionally, it was understood that the reported payment included police officers engaged in the northern part of the country due to extended working hours.

2.7.4. Inconsistent Statement

During this period, a statement by the Mayor of Pristina, Përparim Rama, was monitored and assessed as inconsistent. In February 2024, Rama published a project connecting the Arbëria neighborhood with the Palace of Youth and the Grand Hotel. For this project, the head of the capital, during the election campaign in 2021, had promised that it would be realized within three years. However, after investigation by "hibrid.info," discrepancies were found between the project promised during the 2021 local election campaign and the one presented in February 2024.

2.7.5. Partial fulfillment of the promise

In this category of promises, the Deputy Mayor of Pristina, Alban Zogaj, announced in December 2023 the arrival of city bicycles in Pristina. Zogaj had announced the installation of stations in the coming weeks and stated that the bicycles would be ready for use by spring. However, after a check by "hibrid.info" in April 2024, it was confirmed that from the arrival of bicycles until the date of publication of fact-check by "hibrid.info" (April 9, 2024), no concrete results were observed that made them available for use by citizens. Based on the methodology for evaluating fulfillment or adherence to promises, this promise was assessed to have been partially kept.

III.COMPARATIVE SUMMARY OF DISINFORMATION DATA IN KOSOVO BETWEEN TWO ANNUAL PERIODS

This section of the report aims to present, in a summarized and comparative format, the empirical data collected over two years of monitoring misinformation or disinformation in Kosovo. The "hibrid.info" platform began daily monitoring of misleading content in July 2022, and now marks two full years of monitoring activities.

For the first annual period July 2022 – June 2023, "hibrid.info" published two semi-annual reports[19], and for the following period July 2023 – June 2024 this annual report will be published. Accordingly, this section of the report compares data from both annual periods regarding the state of disinformation in Kosovo.

Evaluative Categories of Information Disorder

Regarding the information disorder categories, the data are almost the same in both periods of the year, with some differences between them. Similar to this annual period, in the previous period as well, the "Clickbait" category was the highest (25.3%), followed closely by the "Disinformation" category (25%), with a difference of only 0.3%.

The fundamental difference between these two evaluative categories across the two annual periods is that the percentage of "Clickbait" and "Disinformation" publications in the previous period was higher compared to the period covered by this report. The current period shows a

slight decrease in misleading publications in both categories, due to an increase in misleading content in other evaluative categories such as "Fake News," "Unverified Content," "Hoax," etc. During this period, publications in Albanian by social media publishers were not only focused on disseminating disinformation (14%) but also fake news (14%), unverified content (11%), and misinformation categorized as hoaxes (10%). In the previous period, there were fewer misinforming publications in these categories because the social media were not monitored during the July 2022 – December 2022 period. Social media publishers began to be monitored by the

[19] The first monitoring report on information disorder in Kosovo for the July-December 2022 period can be found here: <https://hibrid.info/crregullimi-informativ-ne-periudhen-e-dyte-te-vitit-2022/>. The second monitoring report on the information disorder in Kosovo for the semi-annual period January-June 2023 is available here: <https://hibrid.info/prapa-ekraneve-raport-vjetor-per-gjendjen-e-crregullimit-informativ/>.

"hibrid.info" platform from January 2023, that is why there were fewer publications in these categories in the past annual period, particularly fake news, unverified content, and hoaxes, as one can see in the data presented in the following figure. Furthermore, it is observed that social media publishers produce significantly fewer misleading content in the "Clickbait"

category compared to mainstream media (for more details see Figure 12 of this report). The increase in misleading content in these evaluative categories of disinformation has had a direct impact on the "Clickbait" and "Disinformation" categories, leading to a slight decrease in these categories for the current period compared to the previous one.

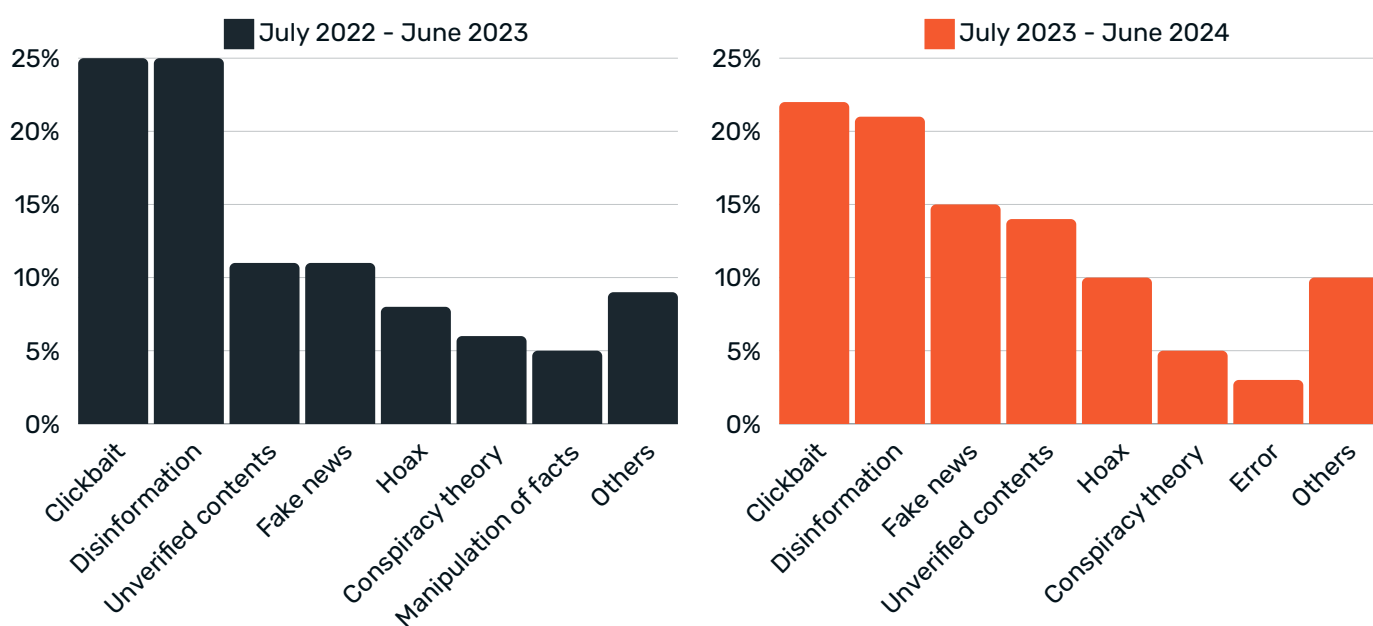


Figure 22: Comparing misinformation content data by evaluation categories of information disorder between the two annual periods (2022-2023 and 2023-2024)

Misinformation topics

Significant differences are observed in the themes of misinformation used by publishers to create misleading content. During this period of the year, the main topic addressed was the conflict between Israel and Hamas, due to numerous publications on this foreign conflict by publishers in Albanian on social media,

particularly on Facebook and TikTok. In the previous annual period (2022-2023), events in northern Kosovo were the main topic of disinformation, whereas in the 2023-2024 period, the north was ranked only third.

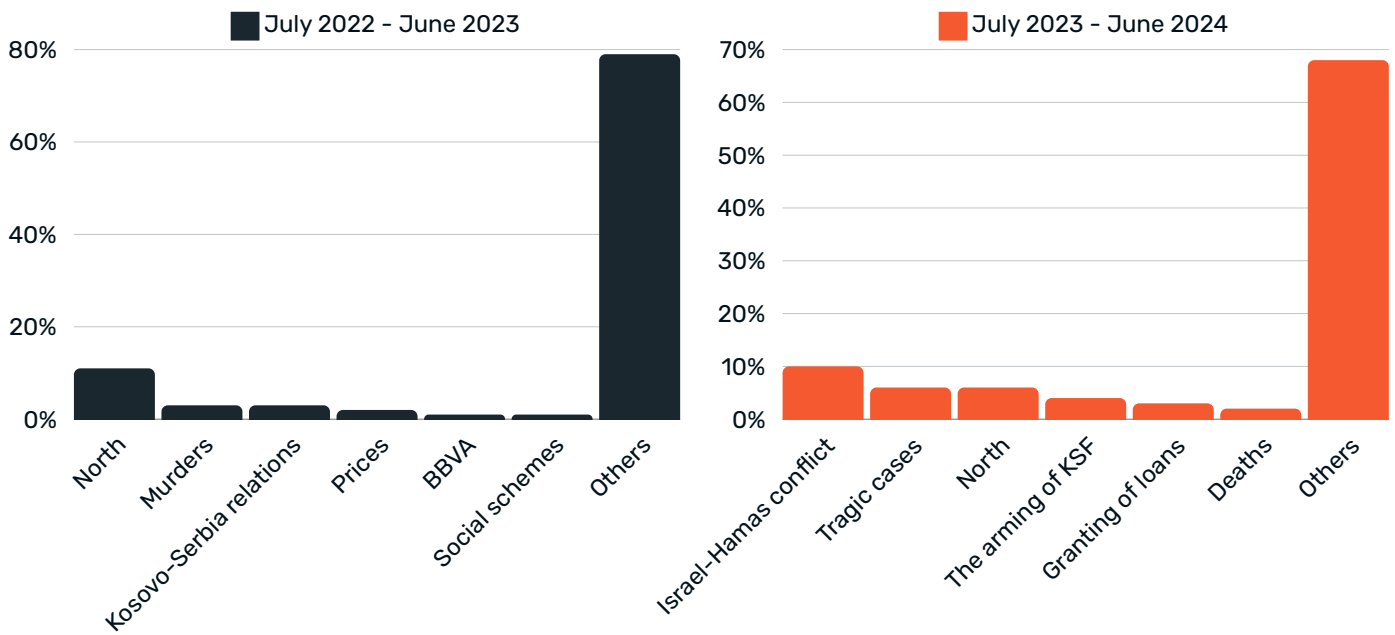


Figure 23: Comparing the main topics of misinformation between the two annual periods (2022-2023 and 2023-2024)

Fields of misinformation

Significant differences are also observed in the areas of misinformation. In this period, misinformation content has been dominated by security-related issues, whereas in the previous period, political topics were predominant. It seems that these two fields have swapped places between the two annual periods. This is

because during the previous annual period, misinformation in the field of security was ranked third, whereas political misinformation in the current period is ranked third, respectively. Social issues have remained unchanged in both monitoring periods, consistently holding second place with nearly the same percentage.

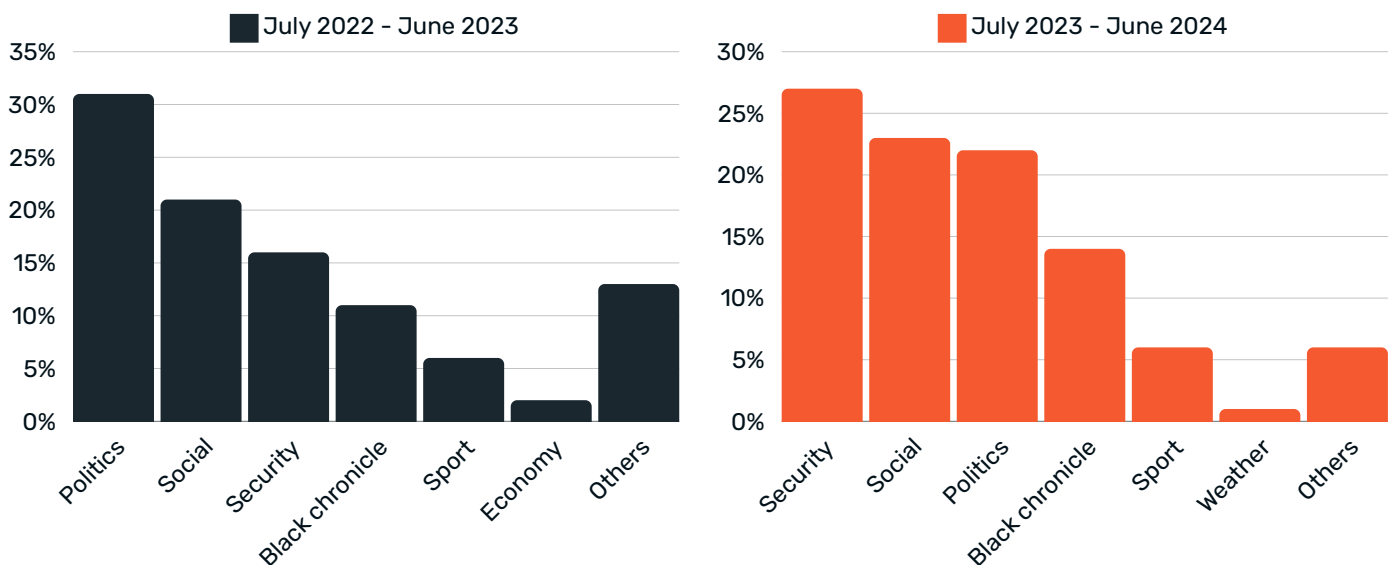


Figure 24: Comparing data on the main areas of misinformation between the two periods of the year (2022-2023 and 2023-2024)

Types of publishers

One of the main findings in the monitoring of disinformation content relates to the types of publishers who have created and distributed disinformation articles. Based on the sample of misleading content monitored by "hibrid.info" for this annual period, social media publishers have been responsible for publishing the majority of misinformative articles. This is the first time that more than half of the misinformation publications were created and distributed by publishers on social media rather than

on real or suspicious media. Moreover, this is a major difference from the previous annual period when real media had published significantly more misleading content compared to social media. However, it is important to explain that "hibrid.info" methodology began measuring social media publishers as of January 2023. Consequently, the data for social media from previous period only covers January-June 2023 and does not include earlier period of July-December 2022.

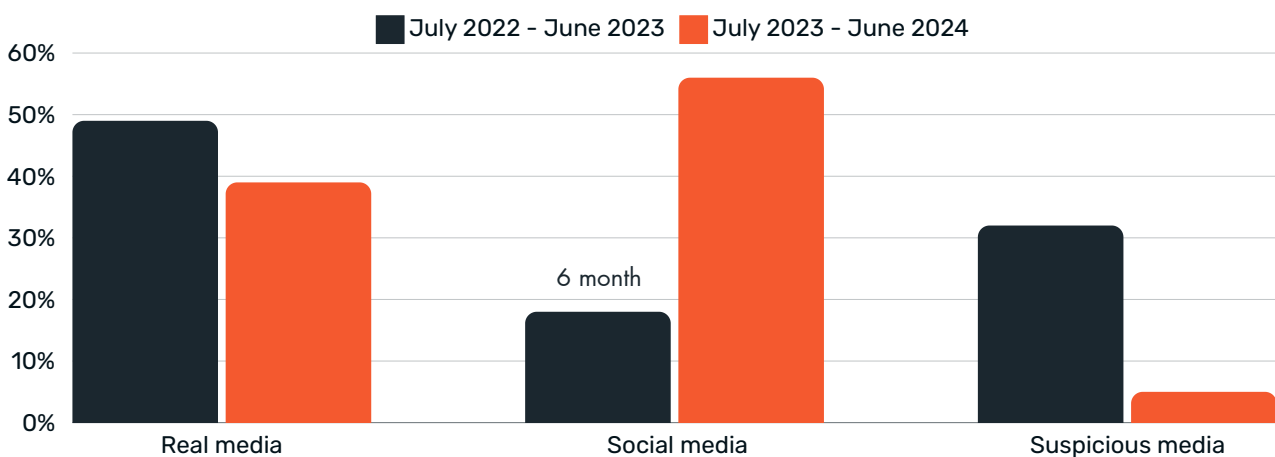


Figure 25: Comparison of data on the types of publishers who disseminated misinformation articles between the two periods (2022-2023 and 2023-2024)

The most mentioned institutions

Similar to the previous period, during this annual period, security sector institutions in Kosovo have dominated the discourse of monitored misleading content. In this regard, the Kosovo Security Force is the

most frequently mentioned, followed by the Kosovo Police. Compared to the previous period, the Kosovo Police was in the first place, as shown in the figure below.

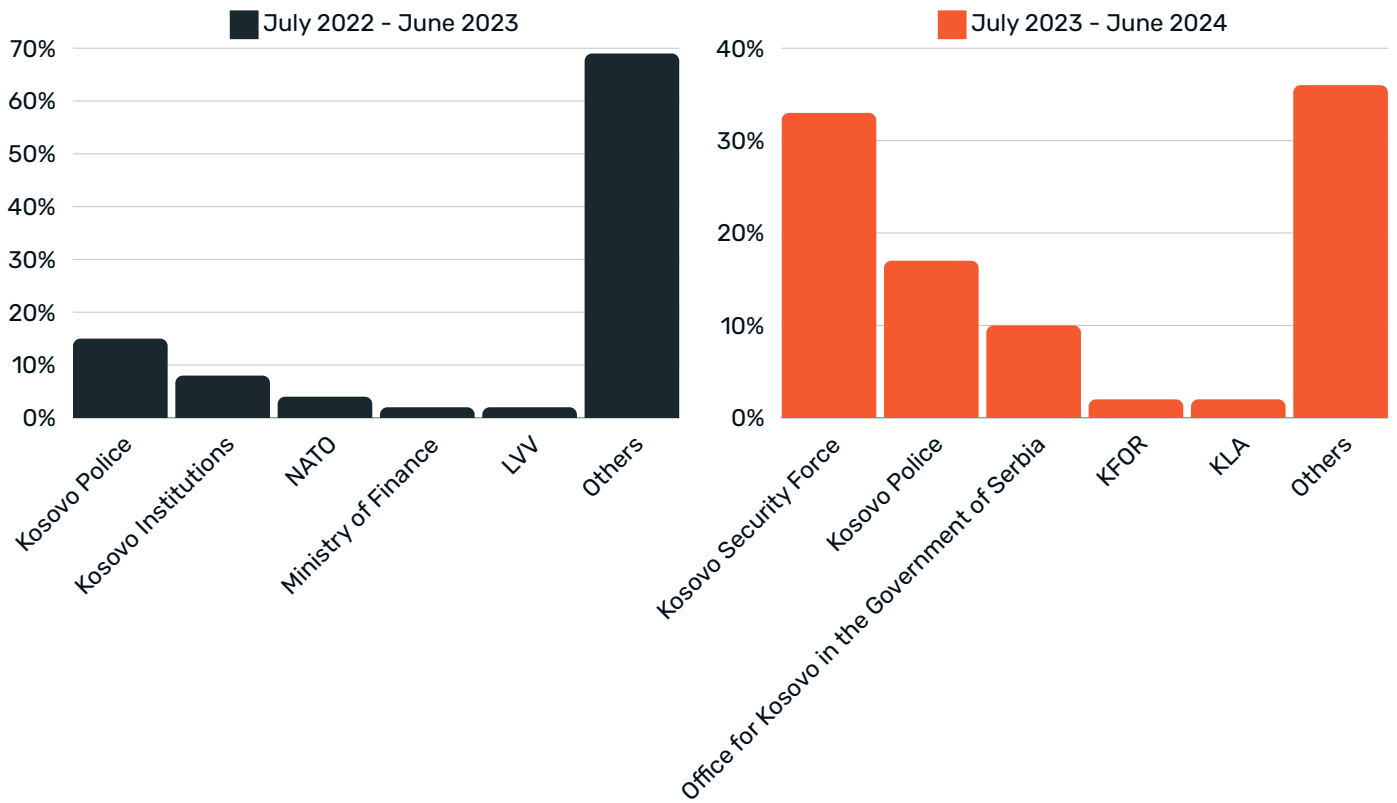


Figure 26: Comparing data for mentioned institutions in publications with misleading content between the two annual periods (2022-2023 and 2023-2024)

The most mentioned personalities

Regarding the most talked-about personalities during this annual period, Kosovo's Prime Minister, Albin Kurti, continues to dominate various misleading content. Even in the previous annual

period, Kurti was the most talked-about figure among various publishers in Albanian-language media and Serbian-language media in their misleading content about developments in Kosovo.

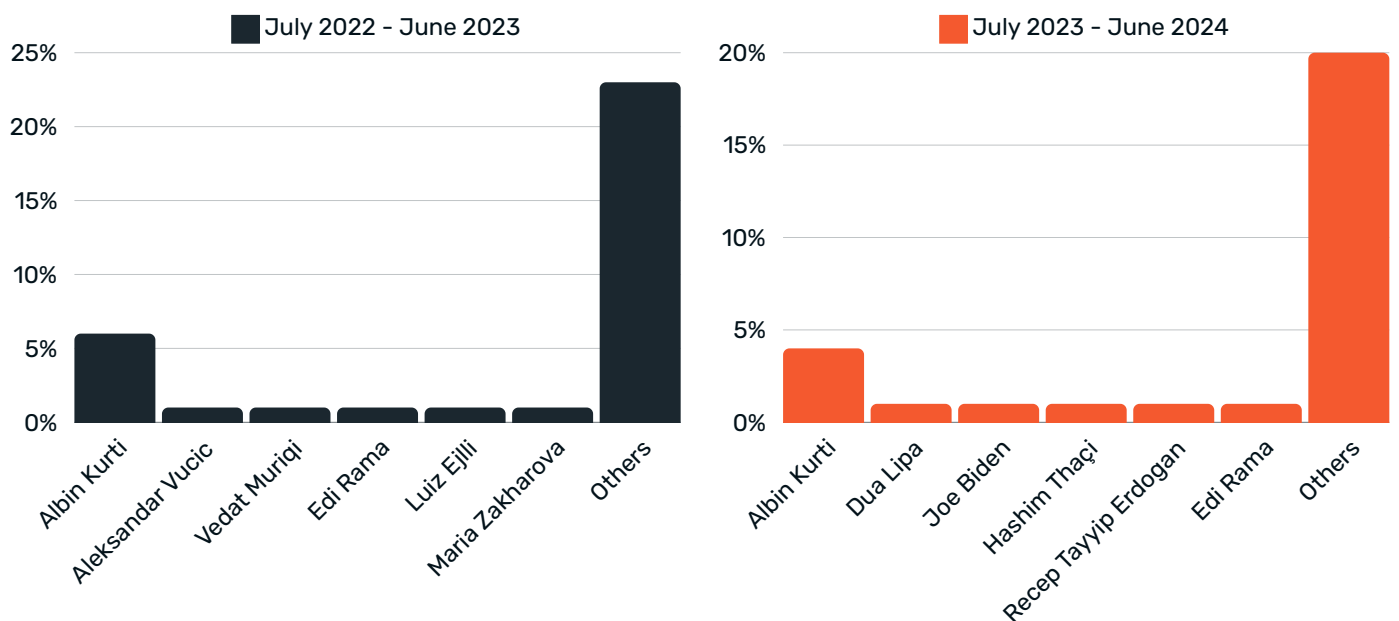


Figure 27: Comparing data on personalities mentioned in publications with misinformation content between the two annual periods (2022-2023 and 2023-2024)

4. (MIS)INFORMATION PRACTICE

Informational disruption in Kosovo primarily occurs on social media, where misleading content is created and disseminated either intentionally or unintentionally. In a specific political context and aiming to reach a broader audience, social media platforms are unrestrained in their dissemination of any information at an unprecedentedly rapid pace.

The rise of social media, coupled with its widespread use by media outlets, publishers, and various users, has enabled misleading content to reach readers and social media users just as quickly as accurate news and confirmed information. This has led to the creation of many online media outlets in Kosovo, which produce and distribute various news, including those with misleading content.

Data collected by “hibrid.info” show that online media, in addition to having an online presence through websites, also maintain an active presence on social media. The most influential social media platform in Kosovo is Facebook, where publications from media and other online operators that disseminate misinformative content are widely shared. TikTok is also used by accounts to distribute misinformation, though Twitter is used significantly less.

Today's technology allows for the rapid and easy publication and distribution of information, but it also exposes users and the general public to informational disorders. This complicates the oversight, control, and eventual sanctioning of media and online pages that disseminate misinformation. This is one of the main challenges identified in reports from international organizations, which criticize the current legislation for its shortcomings in regulating online media activities. Since 2020, newspapers are no longer printed in Kosovo, and the Kosovar public primarily obtains information online, given the high level of internet penetration in Kosovo and the continued role of television as a traditional source of news. Surveys by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics in October 2022 indicate an almost universal internet penetration in Kosovo, at 97.9%.

The challenge remains regulating the digital space and addressing some websites and social media accounts that publish disinformation. This situation is further complicated by the speed at which information spreads online and by the nature of social media, which allows for rapid and widespread access to audiences. Social media users often lack the tools or time to verify the accuracy of the information they see, which contributes to the spread of disinformation.

V. MEDIA REGULATION IN KOSOVO

During this annual period, the issue of media regulation in Kosovo has dominated public discourse, with significant attention from the media community, civil society, and political and institutional representatives in the country. The mechanism for media regulation in Kosovo is the Independent Media Commission (IMC), which is a constitutional and legal institution. The IMC is an independent body responsible for the regulation, management, and oversight of the broadcasting frequency spectrum. The IMC is an independent body with powers for the regulation, management and supervision of the broadcasting frequency spectrum, and based on the applicable Law on IMC[20] (Law No. 04/L-44 enacted in 2012), regulates the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of natural and legal persons providing audio and audiovisual media services[21], including radios and televisions in Kosovo.

However, until now, online media have not been subject to legal regulation, neither under the current Law on the IMC nor under any other law in Kosovo.[22] The European Union has consistently requested from Kosovo institutions to amend the current Law on the IMC to include the regulation of online audiovisual media

within the IMC's competencies, in accordance with the EU's Audiovisual Media Services Directive.[23] Meanwhile, the Government of Kosovo approved the new Draft Law on the IMC in December 2023[3] After proceeding through the Assembly, it was adopted by the members of the Kosovo Assembly in the first reading in March 2024[24] and in the second reading four months later, in July 2024. [25] The content of this draft law, prepared by the Government, has sparked significant debate among the media community, civil society, and international organizations, which have provided feedback and expressed objections regarding certain aspects of the draft law related to media regulation in Kosovo. Furthermore, the approved draft law states explicitly that it is "partially compliant with Directive (EU) 2010/13/EU on Audiovisual Media Services and Directive (EU) 2018/1808," implying that it has not been fully aligned with the relevant EU Directive.[26]

Serious observations and recommendations regarding the content of the draft law were also expressed by the Council of Europe through a legal opinion in May 2024.[27] Serious observations and recommendations regarding the content of the draft law were

[20] [Law No. 04/L-44 for the Independent Media Commission.](#)

[21] Article 3, [Law No. 04/L-44 for the Independent Media Commission.](#)

[22] Avdiu, P., & Osmani, S. (2023). [Behind the Screens: Annual report on the state of information disorder](#), p. 44. Pristina: ADS/hibrid.info.

[23] European Commission. (2023). [Kosovo 2023 Report](#), f. 97. Brussels: European Commission.

[24] Uka, A. (27 December 2023). [The government adopts the draft law on Independent Media Commission.](#) Kallxo.com.

[25] Radio Free Europe. (7 March 2024). [The Assembly adopts in the first reading the Draft Law on the IMC.](#)

[26] Radio Free Europe. (11 July 2024). [The Assembly adopts the controversial draft law on media.](#)

[27] Article 1, Draft Law on the IMC.

also expressed by the Council of Europe through a legal opinion in May 2024.[28] According to an analysis by the Forum for Information Integrity published in June 2024, out of 12 key recommendations from the Council of Europe, only 2 were addressed by the relevant parliamentary media committee, while the remaining 10 recommendations were not addressed at all.[29] This means that the overwhelming majority of the Council of Europe's recommendations, or 83% of them, were not considered before the draft law was submitted to the Assembly for a second reading vote.[30] This has also been confirmed by representatives of the Council of Europe, who stated that the draft law contains problematic provisions regarding misinformation and harmful content, and that the Council of Europe's recommendations were not incorporated into the draft law.[31]

Media experts, journalists and media editors have criticized that the delegation of online media regulation to the IMC under the new draft law resulted also from the lack of concrete and serious engagement by the Kosovo Press Council (KMSHK), as a self-regulatory mechanism for online media in Kosovo. According to them, the media community in Kosovo has only reacted to these issues after the Kosovo Government initiated the drafting of the IMC Draft Law, which places online media under the responsibility of the IMC[32].As a solution, they have proposed following the models of EU countries for

self-regulation of online media that could be adapted to the context of Kosovo. This could avoid state or political interference in the functioning of online media, considering that the IMC is a state institution and could be exposed to political influence.[33]

On the other hand, in the practical operation of media in Kosovo, whether television or online, a serious challenge is their interaction with the digital aspect amidst rapid technological developments, especially those related to social media (Facebook, TikTok, etc.) In this regard, the adaptation of traditional media to new trends in the digital space is challenged by the balance between the financial opportunities provided by digital space through clicks and maintaining quality and professional standards in news creation and distribution for accurate, professional, and impartial information.[34] Experts on Kosovo media emphasize the importance of developing adequate business plans by media outlets and criticize them for failing to properly adapt to the needs of digital space, while this is exploited by suspicious publishers to disseminate various news, particularly on social media, aiming to increase clicks and their profits regardless of the quality of news they disseminate. Given this, media experts have recommended that media outlets in Kosovo aiming to maintain professionalism should review their methods of disseminating and broadcasting information on social media. [35]

[28] Council of Europe. (2024). Legal Opinion on the Draft Law on the Independent Media Commission of Kosovo. LEX/FoE (2024)6, 24 May 2024.

[29] Sbunker. (11 June 2024). Analysis of amendments to the draft law for the Independent Media Commission.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Redenica, M. (26 June 2024). The CoE Commissioner for Human Rights: The adoption of the Draft Law on IMC would violate the freedom of media. Koha.net.


[32] The focus group with media experts and specialists organized by "hibrid.info" Prishtina, 6 June 2024.

[33] Ibid.


[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.


Recommendations




To review the draft law on the Independent Media Commission in accordance with the 2010/13/EU on Audiovisual Media Services Directive and 2018/1808 Directive, taking into account key recommendations of the Council of Europe.




Government institutions, particularly the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, as well as the relevant mechanisms, should urgently engage in the inclusion of media and digital literacy subjects in primary and secondary schools in Kosovo, considering that disinformation is now a reality that will not disappear quickly.



Information campaigns should be organized, involving regulatory and self-regulatory media bodies, media outlets, and civil society, to educate the public on distinguishing between true news and misinformation. This will help parties and broader audience to understand the role of these mechanisms.



Fact-checking platforms in Kosovo should intensify their activities in identifying misinformation and false content from various media and publishers. This is necessary to raise awareness among readers and online users about the risks of disinformation and false news.



It is recommended to develop professional capacities of media in Kosovo by establishing mandatory requirements for intensive and ongoing training for journalists, with a focus on methods and techniques for identifying and detecting disinformation, false content, and fake news. It is also essential to regulate media ownership, transparency, and financing in one form or another.

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 .

ERROR

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.

HOAX

The rating "hoax" is given to those informational contents that are manipulated in the visual (deepfake, cheapfake), sound (audio) or textual aspect of the content in order to mislead the audience. Typically, this form of fraud is used to produce fake and manipulated content.

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 is 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

Dubious 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.

TRUTH STATEMENT

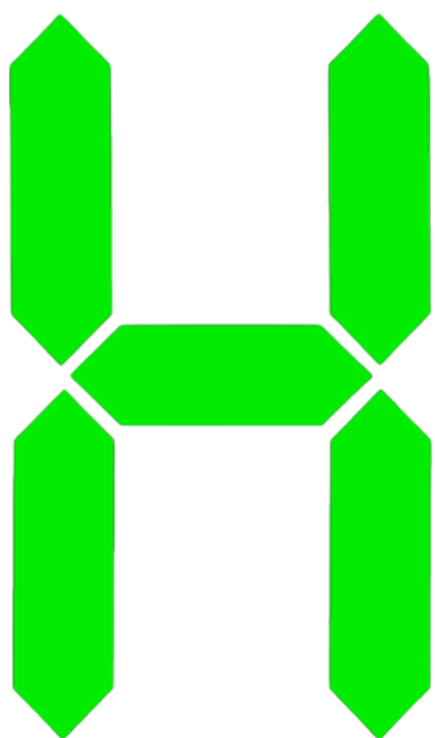
In the truthfulness category, those statements that contain statements related to objective facts, the accuracy of which can be determined by objective verification, are evaluated. Statements processed in this category are given a rating - false statement, half true or even true statement.

SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

The assessment of sustainability was given on the basis of a comparison of the current and earlier public views of political actors. If the views on an issue do not change during the public engagement of the observed person, such statements are evaluated as stable. And if there has been a significant change in attitudes, such statements are evaluated as unstable.

FULFILLING AND KEEPING PROMISES

Fulfilling or keeping promises mainly refers to pre-elections, which are monitored at the central and local level during the four-year mandate. This research is mainly done in the election campaign, where the main political figures are followed, so there is a fact check in this category - fulfillment of promises (if they are kept), partial keeping of promises and non-keeping of promises (if they are not kept).



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