

## EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Participant:	101081624 - Stichting Dare to be Grey (DtbG)
PIC number:	909174502
Project name and acronym:	Immunising citizens against dis/misinformation - IMMUNE 2 INFODEMIC

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	3
Event name:	Disinformation on elections: tools to navigate the social media landscape
Type:	Workshop
In situ/online:	In-situ
Location:	The Hague, The Netherlands
Date(s):	6 February 2024
Website(s) (if any):	<a href="https://www.daretobegrey.com/stories/6ofc2fgcprsmzr37a8j9sx91wv7ayp-cbh9r">https://www.daretobegrey.com/stories/6ofc2fgcprsmzr37a8j9sx91wv7ayp-cbh9r</a>
Participants	
Female:	18
Male:	7
Non-binary:	0
From country 1 [Netherlands]:	23
From country 2 [Czech Republic]:	1
From country 3 [Italy]:	1
Total number of participants:	25
From total number of countries:	3
Description	

The present workshop was designed with a dual purpose: to equip young activists with the necessary tools to navigate the online landscape and to foster a deeper understanding as well as a critical approach of the ramifications of mis and disinformation in the context of elections. This is particularly relevant because the year 2024 is poised to witness many elections across the globe, including European elections. Within this framework, research on electoral disinformation highlights a significant need for increased efforts to combat electoral misinformation and enhanced measures from both political actors and online platforms to address the spread of misinformation effectively, as indicated by a recent survey of over 13,000 EU citizens administered by Upgradedemocracy project.

By fostering discussions on the impact of disinformation on elections, we sought to arm young activists with the insights and tools necessary to safeguard the democratic processes amidst the tumultuous currents of the digital age. Discussions revolved around the importance of combating disinformation in the context of elections and the harmful consequences of mobilising voter sentiment. Mis and disinformation were deemed to fuel polarisation and division within society, posing a threat to democracy and dissuading voter participation. The main disinformation narratives surrounding the 2023 elections were highlighted, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, climate change, and migration. These subjects are expected to significantly influence the upcoming electoral landscape and may be exploited to evoke emotional responses and hinder constructive, public discourse with nuanced arguments.

The discussion also focused on an in-depth explanation of media literacy (ML), digital literacy (DL), and critical thinking (CT) tools enabling them to navigate the digital landscape with a critical approach, particularly within the context of narratives related to elections. For example, some rules to react to emotion-provoking questions were explained, together with guidance on how to evaluate the accuracy of claims in the media.

During the workshop, several case studies were presented with the aim of concretely show disinformation strategies and tools application. The first one centred on migration-related topics before Spanish elections. The case study shed light on a prevalent narrative depicting migrants as burdensome parasites and profiteers, purportedly draining public funds and enjoying preferential treatment over Spanish citizens. Particularly alarming was the spread of false information alleging that "African immigrants in an illegal situation" in Spain were receiving a monthly stipend of 2,000 euros from the government. However, a thorough investigation revealed this claim to be unequivocally false, underscoring the insidious nature of disinformation campaigns aimed at stigmatizing migrant communities. This example underscored the importance of media literacy and critical thinking in combating the propagation of harmful stereotypes and false narratives surrounding migration.

The conversation also revolved around the challenges posed by the limited amount of accessible tools that detect AI-generated content. This is particularly important when artificially produced content is used to influence the outcome of elections. Participants explored the role of AI in propagating false information as well as in limiting our ability to

have access to reliable information. The vast accessibility of these AI tools, such as chatbots, and the harmful consequences of the spread of disinformation were acknowledged. Specifically, participants draw attention to the additional complexities of recognising and debunking AI-generated texts over audio or videos, attributing this to the ease with which highly convincing false stories can be generated within minutes. However, a specific case study involving a politician running for the upcoming Slovakian elections was analysed. Despite the evident technical crudeness of the deepfake, clearly discernible as not being authentic human speech, its dissemination occurred rapidly through various channels. This example demonstrates how a seemingly easy to recognise AI-generated content can generate harmful consequences in the political context.

A third example was presented to showcase online disinformation campaigns about the Israel-Palestine conflict and its real-life harmful consequences.

Pro-Israel accounts have been observed utilizing terms such as 'crisis actors' and 'Pallywood', aimed at discrediting Palestinian suffering. This narrative downplays the severity of the situation, ultimately perpetuating a skewed understanding of the conflict and hugely influencing the political debate.

The session culminated in hands-on practice with real-life case studies. Each group was tasked with conducting a rigorous fact-checking process to analyse the claims made on different social media posts. Through collaborative analysis and critical examination, participants evaluated the credibility of the information presented, distinguishing between reliable and unreliable content. They meticulously analysed the language of the presented social media posts, recognised emotion-provoking content, evaluated the credibility of the authors, and posed critical questions to verify the authenticity of social media posts.

In summary, the conversation was centred on the need for practical and easy-to-use tools to empower youngsters to navigate the increasingly polarised social media landscape, especially in the context of elections. We hope to have offered insights and enhanced critical thinking, media literacy and digital literacy tools that support young change-makers in their activist practices.