General Rules for Investigations within Area 2

Rationale: Supporting country-specific and thematic investigations that can provide new insights into concrete cases of disinformation, the specific mechanisms that enable its dissemination online, and its impact on public opinion, with a view to strengthening a EU-relevant evidence-base about the dynamics of disinformation and paving the way to follow-on research

Objectives

- ❖ Plugging the existing knowledge gaps on the scale and scope of disinformation in Europe

- ❖ Complementing the activities of the European Digital Media Observatory (hereafter EDMO), in cooperation with EDMO's National Hubs

- ❖ Combining best journalistic practices, outcomes from fact-checking activities and analytical frameworks from leading research

Eligible Entities

- ° Non-profit organisations, including public service media;
- ° Universities;
- ° Educational institutions;
- ° Research centres;
- ° Non-governmental organisations;
- ° Media Literacy organisations
- ° For-profit fact-checkers, news media organisations, technology providers and research companies of any status and size, on certain conditions

Obligation to constitute a consortium

Excluded entities may take part in the projects at their own costs or via sub-contracting

Project Size/Duration

Projects applying to this Call should have a maximum duration of 9 months and can benefit from a grant of up to € 150 000

Eligible Activities

- ° Acquisition and analysis of existing research, fact-checking materials and datasets;

- ° Production, distribution and adaptation in different languages of reports and analyses;

- ° Awareness-raising actions, including conferences, seminars, and events, and dissemination activities;

- ° Usage of relevant innovative tools;

- ° Social media campaigns;

- ° Creation and improvement of networks and exchanges of good practices

# 1. Investigations on Disinformation relating to the Israel-Hamas War

Rationale

Initial investigations point to rampant crisis-related disinformation on very large online platforms (VLOPs) and very large online search engines (VLOSEs)

Disinformation contributes to aggravating the situation on the grounds, interferes with diplomatic efforts and amplifies ethnic and religious hatred and tensions in many countries, including in Europe

In view of its geopolitical consequences, disinformation-related threats need to be addressed through expedite action
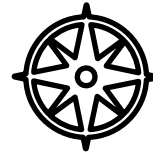
General objectives

- **Deepen public knowledge about the war-related disinformation content**

- **Expose tactics & techniques used by relevant actors to amplify the reach of their content**

- **Analyse the degree and patterns of online dissemination, notably towards European audiences, and actions that relevant online platforms have undertaken to mitigate resulting risks**

- **Gain new insights regarding the impact of detected disinformation on the conflict dynamics, diplomatic efforts, and the affected populations, including impact on concerned religious and ethnic groups within the EU**

Specific objectives

- **Gather multi-platform and multi-lingual data on sources, actors and vectors of disinformation and build a dedicated data base**

- **Study the relevant narratives and distribution dynamics (including methods, dissemination patterns and targets of disinformation) on different platforms and in different languages inside the EU**

- **Provide a specific focus on narratives with a racial, religious or ethnic frame, which can harm the safety or contribute to the marginalisation/stigmatisation of minority groups within European countries.**

2. Investigations on Disinformation relating to the 2024 EP Elections

Rationale

The 2024 EP elections are likely to become a target for interference, influence operations and disinformation campaigns.

European fact-checking organisations are preparing to respond to this threat through task-driven collaborative efforts. However, to adequately investigate potentially disruptive interferences with the electoral processes across EU Member States, the expertise and capabilities of existing fact-checking organisations and networks need to be combined with complementary data analysis competences and enable the development of dedicated data bases
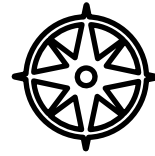
General objectives

- Monitor content on media, very large online platforms(VLOPs) and very large online search engines (VLOSEs)

- Promptly debunk false or misleading information

- Identify relevant narratives before and during the electoral campaign

- Carry out a post-election analysis of the main sources of detected disinformation, online behaviour and dissemination patterns aimed at undermining the integrity of the elections.

Specific objectives

- Gather multi-platform, multi-country and multi-lingual data on sources, vectors, distribution methods, dissemination patterns and targets of disinformation

- Create a broad, cross-country and time-framed model integrating topics, narratives, sources and channels targeting the EU;

- Test the model in the month before and the month after the election, providing when possible early warnings about likely incoming disinformation phenomena

- Review the model after the test, analysing its successes and shortcomings,

3. Investigations on Monetisation of Online Disinformation through Ad Placements
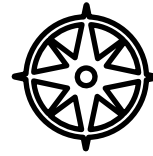
Rationale

Monetisation of disinformation through advertising revenues thrives during critical events. It is therefore likely that the 2024 European Parliament elections will represent an economic opportunity for purveyors of disinformation

Insufficient knowledge regarding the mechanisms that enable ad placements either on online platforms' interfaces next to disinformation content, or on third party websites that systematically purvey disinformation

Urgent action is needed to plug this knowledge gap in view of the upcoming EP elections,

General objectives

- Identify sources and channels of disinformation, collect evidence of ad placements enabling their monetisation, and estimate the revenues derived therefrom

- Obtain a better understanding of the lucrative disinformation economy at large and the dynamics that drive revenues from ad placements

- Build an evidence base regarding the impact of current demonetisation policies, notably in the context of the EP elections, including specific measures under the Code of Practice against Disinformation.

Specific objectives

- Focus on specific online platforms with a view to identifying accounts, channels or pages that systematically purvey disinformation, and build an inventory of ads placements contributing to their monetisation

- Focus on the placement of ads (through advertising networks) on third-party websites that systematically purvey disinformation, and build an inventory of ad-monetised content

- In both cases, use available metrics reflecting traffic and user engagement with relevant content to estimate revenues

General Guidance

A fast-track, **special procedure** applies for applications under this call: applications must be sent no later than **5 February 2024** (12:59CET). EMIF will announce the selected projects in **22 March 2024.**

Before submitting a proposal, applicants should thoroughly check **all the relevant standards**, namely:

- Eligibility criteria
- Operational capacity
- Financial capacity
- Exclusion criteria

Selection criteria are grouped under four common categories:

- Relevance
- Quality of content and activities
- Project management
- Dissemination