

# Assessment Report

## European Media and Information Fund 2023 - 2024

### 0. Executive Summary

This report assesses the third year of activities of the European Media and Information Fund, EMIF, starting on 25 March 2023 and ending on 24 March 2024.

The EMIF has started its activities on 25 March 2021 with an objective of public interest to support fact-checking and media literacy initiatives, as well as fundamental research projects, with a view to addressing the phenomenon of online disinformation in Europe and promoting a more resilient and fact-based digital information ecosystem.

In the light of this context this report is building on the structure of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> assessment report evaluating the first two years of the EMIF.

This assessment report describes in its introduction the purpose of the report and is providing in its 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter background information about the EMIF and its purpose. In its 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter the report is defining the evaluation criteria and is applying those in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter across the following areas: governance of the programme, programme assessment, internal and external communications, and robustness of the programme.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter the report shares its analysis by highlighting key insights, successes, shortcomings and provides 3 recommendations.

The **assessment report comes to the conclusion** that the EMIF has a robust governance, has fit for purpose processes in place, is reactive to challenges arising from political developments and has built an increasingly mature European community of actors combatting disinformation. What is still missing is a systematic impact framework that measures EMIF's impact on effectively combatting disinformation in Europe across all the projects it funds.

**The report recommends** therefore to introduce an impact framework with regular impact assessments by an independent expert; to implement the fund's innovative communication strategy to improve its outreach to potential grantees, potential funders, and the general public; to increase the funder diversity to secure the long-term opportunity of funding and convening actors in this space; and to invite additional members to the Steering Committee.

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## 1. Introduction

The European Media and Information Fund's, EMIF's, Management Committee has commissioned this report to assess the relevance of the overall EMIF approach as well as its compliance with the set of standards laid out in the governing documents of the fund.

This assessment report is covering the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of operations of the EMIF, starting on 25 March 2023 and ending on 24 March 2024. It is building on the structure of the 1st and 2nd assessment report evaluating the first two years of the EMIF.

The basis for this evaluation is EMIF's 2023 – 2024 draft Annual Progress Report. The final Annual Progress Report will be published on 15 July 2024. Furthermore the EMIF Implementation Framework, and the EMIF Management Committee's Internal Rules acted as a basis for this evaluation. The evaluator had access to all relevant documents, including the Agreement establishing the European Media and Information Fund between European University Institute and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the minutes of the Management Committee meetings throughout the reporting period, the signed "Declaration of Commitment on Impartiality, Independence, Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality and Personal Data" for members of the Management Committee and expert evaluators, and all signed grant agreements with grantees.

During its third year the EMIF has implemented the full scope of the fund across its four funding areas: (1) support of fact-checking, (2) investigations into disinformation, (3) supporting research – studies and sandboxes and (4) actions in support of media literacy. The second funding areas has been extended to a Fast-track Investigations call reacting on political events including the Israel-Hamas war as well as the 2024 EU elections. 42 projects have been funded within the reporting period 2023/2024.

The assessment has been exercised btw. 5 June and 11 July 2024 by Max von Abendroth. He is the Chair of the Philanthropy Forum at the World Association of PPP Units and Professionals, WAPPP, works as Senior Advisor for Europe & Germany at the Media Development Investment Fund, MDIF, and is Project Lead at The Partnering Initiative, an Oxford based think tank. Max is the former Executive Director of the European Magazine Media Association, EMMA, and the Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe, Dafne.

## 2. Background information

Since the EMIF has been set up on 25 March 2021 the phenomenon of disinformation has gained additional momentum through generative AI providing cheap and fast opportunities to create misleading and fake content, evolving Large Language Models (LLMs) generating and spreading huge quantities of false or misleading information that can influence people's beliefs and behaviors, and rising geopolitical tensions creating fertile ground for systematic and large scale disinformation campaigns as part of hybrid warfare. At the same time the news environment is changing dramatically with more and more editorial newsrooms being closed across Europe, professional journalistic content not reaching the young generation any more through traditional news channels, and disinformation being used by populist parties as a strategy to

accelerate the polarization of democratic societies. The recent elections across Europe are proof points for this dynamic.

In this context the EMIF is entrusted with an objective of public interest to support fact-checking and media literacy initiatives, as well as fundamental research projects, with a view to addressing the phenomenon of online disinformation in Europe and promoting a more resilient and fact-based digital information ecosystem. The EMIF has been set up in 2021 by **Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation** (CGF) and the **European University Institute** (EUI) as a multi-donor fund and is now in its third year of operations. This report looks at the third year of the EMIF operations.

CGF runs the EMIF Unit that acts as the EMIF secretariat. It ensures EMIF's day-to-day management and executes the decisions taken by EMIF's Management Committee. The EUI is responsible for coordinating academic oversight and the dissemination of project findings to academics, specialists, policymakers and the general public. CGF appoints one representative as a full member of EMIF's Management Committee, who acts as a Chair of the Management Committee. Furthermore the EUI appoints one independent member of the Management Committee. An independent expert is appointed by CGF and EUI jointly as third member of the Management Committee.

The EMIF is operating under the scientific guidance of the **European Digital Media Observatory** (EDMO). EDMO advises on the evaluation process and selects experts to serve as evaluators, ensuring complete independence and relevant competence for each of the EMIF's intervention areas.

The Fund accepted **Google's** inaugural contribution of 25.000.000 EUR over five years. Google is not involved in decision-making and does not profit from the intellectual property of any ideas or projects financed through the Fund. The tripartite agreement between CGF, EUI and Google sets out the terms of conditions for Google to contribute to the EMIF.

The governance of the Fund is regulated by Portuguese legislation.

The EMIF has four priority areas of intervention:

1. **Boosting fact-checking actions in Europe:**  
This Call aims at strengthening the European fact-checking ecosystem by focusing on two priority actions: (a) Urgent Actions and (b) Scale-up Projects. This Call's total indicative allocation is 4.350.000 EUR over the period of five years.
2. **Multidisciplinary investigations on disinformation**  
This Call seeks to address the existing gaps in knowledge regarding the scale and scope of disinformation in Europe and thus gain a better understanding of the policies implemented to counter it. This Call's total indicative allocation is 4.600.000 EUR over the period of five years.
3. **Research – studies and sandboxes**  
This Call aims at supporting broad and profound scientific studies on the disinformation phenomenon, encompassing its causes, societal impacts and possible responses. This Call's total indicative allocation is 4.600.000 EUR over the period of five years.

#### 4. Actions in support of media literacy

The key aim of this Call is to support initiatives that enhance digital media and information literacy skills in Europe. This Call's total indicative allocation is 4.600.000 EUR over the period of five years.

Out of 166 applications across all four funding areas, 42 projects have been approved for funding during the reporting year 2023/2024 with a total grant amount of 6.355.540,59 EUR. Again this year the Management Committee took the decision to reallocate parts of the budget to the Fast-track Investigations call that closed on 5 February 2024.

This third year of the EMIF showed also significantly enhanced outreach in terms of communication activities as well as event formats to build the community of fact checkers and organisations fighting disinformation across Europe.

In response to the recommendations of the 2022/2023 assessment report during the evaluation period of this report the EMIF

- has further strengthened its community through events, presence at 3<sup>rd</sup> party events and engagement measures like regular newsletters;
- has stepped up the fundraising capacities by employing a fundraising associate and further explored the diversification of funding – so far with no further funding commitments;
- has discussed, but not developed and implemented an impact framework for the EMIF and its funded projects.

### 3. Criteria

In this section the criteria for the assessment of the level of achievements of the programme results during the reporting period will be introduced. These lay the basis for the evaluation in chapter 4.

The sources of information to be evaluated have been provided by the EMIF's Management Committee during the briefing process. On this basis the evaluation in chapter 4 will look into the following areas:

#### A. Governance

The assessment report looks into the established processes within and across the different governance bodies and evaluate their compliance with the standards set in the related documents ruling the governance of the programme. The evaluation will also reflect on how the EMIF's governance is meeting today's standards for good governance for non-profit organisations, including:

- Code of conduct for members of the governance bodies
- Inclusion policy to acknowledge diversity and sensitivity for cultural differences
- Conflicts of interest policy
- Privacy policy
- Document retention policy
- Gift acceptance policy

- Self-assessment process
- Whistleblower protection policy

#### B. Programme assessment

The assessment report assesses the fund allocation and the relevance of the programme, including if funds have been allocated in a balanced way and in line with the mission of the EMIF. Furthermore the evaluation will assess the compliance of the processes linked to the distribution of funds, to ensure fair and equal treatment of all applicants and guarantees a segregation of duties. Finally the communication and transparency about the fund allocation process, the decisions taken and the funds disbursed will be assessed.

In line with the first and second evaluation report published in 2022 and 2023 this evaluation report looks at the output and outcome of the programme during the reporting period:

- **“Output”** refers to the numbers related to the calls issued, applications received, projects approved and grants paid out. This report will assess, if the numbers reported are in line with the targets set by the programme.
- **“Outcome”** refers to the projects and initiatives that the EMIF funded. This report will assess, if the projects and initiatives supported by the programme are in line with the objectives of the programme.
- **“Relevance”** refers to how the projects and initiatives funded by the EMIF are addressing the problem of disinformation.

#### C. Internal and external communications

The report looks at the quantity of communication measures and assesses the effectiveness of internal and external communications. Regarding the internal communication this report will look at the accessibility of relevant information across the EMIF’s governance. When it comes to external communication the report examines the relevance of the communication measures taken and how they contribute to the visibility and uptake of the programme in the relevant community.

#### D. Robustness of the programme

The report will evaluate the ability of the programme to drive change, attract the most promising solutions addressing the challenge of disinformation, deal with failure and build trust with all stakeholders involved.

Conclusions and recommendations will be drawn in chapter 5 of this evaluation report.

## 4. Evaluation

#### A. Governance

The EMIF is an open, multi-donor initiative established by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, CGF, and the European University Institute, EUI, under the terms established in the Fund’s agreement regulating their relation. The EMIF has no legal personality and is managed by CGF with no participation. The governance of the Fund is regulated by Portuguese legislation. The starting date of the fund is 25 March 2021.

The EMIF's governance is ruled by the following governing documents:

- **Agreement establishing the European Media and Information Fund**, signed by CGF and EUI on 29 March 2021, defining the name, the purpose, the Management Committee, the role of the Foundation (CGF), the management of the Fund, the Fund's financing and accounting rules, the dissolution and provides miscellaneous provisions.
- **Governance Charter** is the Appendix 2 of the above mentioned agreement between CGF and EUI, introducing the "Principles of Governance"
- The **Management Committee Internal Rules** are defining the operating rules of the Management Committee of the EMIF.

The EMIF has the following governing bodies:

- The **Management Committee** executes day-to-day logistics and operations as well as being responsible for the financial management of the calls. The Management Committee is responsible for approving the final list of supported projects per call.
- The **Steering Committee** has a strategic and advisory role vis-à-vis the Management Committee. It is set up by one representative of EUI, an expert of recognized knowledge and impartiality appointed by EUI, a senior representative of CGF, and representatives from like-minded foundations/networks of philanthropic organizations, academia, and/or media/journalism organizations.

In its third year of existence the EMIF has further developed its governance structure and processes:

- Two of the three members of the **Management Committee** have been replaced throughout the reporting period:
  - **Mr. Luis Madureira Pires** was the Chair of EMIF's Management Committee until 31<sup>st</sup> September 2023 and has been replaced by **Pedro Calado** on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023, following a decision of the CGF Board;
  - EUI appointed **Mr. Paolo Cesarini** who served until January 2024 as independent member of the Management Committee; since February 2024 **Fabrizio Tassinari** represents the EUI in the Management Committee;
  - **Ms Joanna Krawczyk** is serving as a member of the Management Committee in her role as an independent expert, appointed jointly by CGF and EUI in 2022.
- The Management Committee at its meeting on 8 March 2024 adopted **updated Internal Rules**, to include the names of the new members of the Management Committee.
- The constituting partners of the EMIF, CGF and EUI, launched the process of setting up the **Steering Committee** that had its first meeting on 7 May 2024 (outside the reporting period of this assessment report). Current Steering Committee members are **Marco Del Panta**, Secretary General, European University Institute (Chair), **Martin Essayan**, Trustee, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and **Miguel Poiares Maduro**, Chair of the Executive Board, EDMO and Part-Time Professor, European University Institute –

Florence School of Transnational Governance. The Steering Committee's Secretariat is led by **Francesca Roberti**, EMIF Project Manager, European University Institute.

The EMIF is applying some of today's **practices for good governance** for non-profit organisations, such as:

- Code of conduct for members of the governance bodies  
The Management Committee has approved a set of Internal Rules on 5 May 2022 and updated them on 8 March 2024.
- Conflicts of interest policy  
The Governance Charter (Art. 13) as well as the Internal Rules of the Management Committee (Art. 3) are explicitly introducing rules to avoid conflict of interest. The application of this policy is confirmed by the changes in the Management Committee throughout this reporting period as well as in some cases documented, when a member of the Management Committee did not participate in the approval of a project that was linked to the organisation they are affiliated to.
- Privacy policy  
The EMIF has no explicit privacy policy, but this is covered by the privacy policy of CGF that is managing the EMIF.
- Whistleblower protection policy  
The EMIF has no explicit whistleblower protection policy, but this is covered by the whistleblower protection policy of CGF that is managing the EMIF.

#### Evaluation:

- The **Management Committee** has met 8 times throughout this reporting period. In the course of this year two members of the Management Committee have been replaced by their originating institutions, CGF and EUI respectively. Both transitions did not impact the quality of the work of the Management Committee.
- The **Steering Committee** has been set up and had its first meeting on 7 May 2024, outside the reporting period of this assessment report. The Committee is in the process of defining its strategic and advisory role as well as extending the membership of the Steering Committee beyond the three current members.
- Following the introduction of the possibility to **reallocate funding** from one funding area to another in the Internal Rules adopted by the Management Committee on 4 August 2022, this procedure has been applied in the course of this reporting period, when the amount of 250.000 EUR that has not been allocated in previous calls, has been allocated to funding area 2, as agreed by the Management Committee on 26 January 2024.
- Regarding **good governance practices** for non-profit organisations the EMIF is covering some relevant policies already. Building on the previous assessment report, additional policies for EMIF to consider are:
  - Inclusion policy to acknowledge diversity and sensitivity for cultural differences
  - Document retention policy
  - Gift acceptance policy
  - Self-assessment process

## B. Programme assessment

In the reporting period the following Calls for Proposal have been closed:

### 1) Support of Fact-Checking

- **30 June 2023:** fifth funding round “Boosting fact-checking activities in Europe”
- **31 October 2023:** sixth funding round “Boosting fact-checking activities in Europe”

### 2) Investigations into Disinformation

- **28 April 2023:** 2<sup>nd</sup> annual call “Multidisciplinary Investigations on Disinformation in Europe.”
- **5 February 2024:** Fact-tack Investigation call: Investigations into Critical Disinformation Threats, with three topics of priority: the Israel-Hamas war, the 2024 elections for the European Parliament (EP) and the monetization of disinformation.

### 3) Research – Studies & Sandboxes

- **28 April 2023:** 2<sup>nd</sup> annual call “Research for a Transparent and Resilient Information Ecosystem”

### 4) Actions in Support of Media Literacy

- **28 April 2023:** 2<sup>nd</sup> call “Media and Information Literacy for Societal Resilience”

#### a. Output:

##### i. Assessment of the numbers reported in the light of being in line with the targets set by the programme

##### ▪ Split of geography

- **Target:** 12 Member States per year (Art. 4 EMIF Governance Charter)
- **Achieved:** Throughout the evaluation period funds have been awarded directly to 42 organisations acting as consortium leaders, based in 26 countries.

##### ▪ Eligibility of applicants and projects

Throughout the 4 funding areas the EMIF has received during the evaluation period 166 applications (in the previous evaluation period the EMIF has received 102 applications). During the evaluation period 100 applications have been admitted and 42 projects have been approved by the Management Committee. The total funding EMIF allocated for these 42 projects is 6.355.540,59 EUR.

##### 1) Support of Fact-Checking

- 28 February 2023: fourth funding round “Boosting fact-checking activities in Europe” [*evaluation and approval during the evaluation period of this assessment report*]

- 30 June 2023: fifth funding round “Boosting fact-checking activities in Europe”
- 31 October 2023: sixth funding round “Boosting fact-checking activities in Europe”

#### **Urgent Action projects:**

##### **Target:**

- Target: up to 55.000 EUR funding per project
- Target: duration of the project up to 6 months
- Target: geographical scope included EU, EEA, UK

##### **Achieved:**

Out of the 21 approved projects, 10 are under the “urgent action” typology with an average financial allocation of 50.484,26 EUR and an average duration of up to 6 month. All projects are within the geographical scope of the EMIF.

#### **Scale Up projects**

##### **Target:**

- Target: up to 80.000 EUR funding per project
- Target: duration of the project up to 12 months
- Target: geographical scope included EU, EEA, UK

##### **Achieved:**

Out of the 14 approved projects, 11 projects are under the “scale up” typology with an average financial allocation of 79.533,20 EUR and duration of up to 12 months. All projects are within the geographical scope of the EMIF.

## **2) Investigations into Disinformation**

- **28 April 2023:** 2nd annual call “Multidisciplinary Investigations on Disinformation in Europe.”

##### **Target:**

- Target: up to 150.000 EUR funding per project
- Target: duration of the project up to 9 months
- Target: geographical scope included EU, EEA, UK

##### **Achieved:**

8 projects have been approved with a total grant amount of 1.139.718,25 EUR and an average financial allocation of 128.767,22 EUR. The duration of the projects is up to 11 months. All projects are within the geographical scope of the EMIF.

- **5 February 2024:** Fast-track Investigations: Investigations into Critical Disinformation Threats, with three topics of priority: the Israel-Hamas war, the 2024 elections for the European Parliament (EP) and the monetization of disinformation.

**Target:**

- Target: up to 150.000 EUR funding per project
- Target: duration of the project up to 9 months
- Target: geographical scope included EU, EFTA, UK

**Achieved:**

5 projects have been approved with a total grant amount of 715.146,51 EUR and an average financial allocation of 143.029,30 EUR. All projects are within the geographical scope of the EMIF.

**3) Research – Studies & Sandboxes**

- **28 April 2023:** 2nd annual call “Research for a Transparent and Resilient Information Ecosystem”

**Target:**

- Target: up to 400.000 EUR funding per project
- Target: duration of the project up to 18 months
- Target: geographical scope included EU, EEA, UK

**Achieved:**

4 projects have been approved with a total grant amount of 1.594.458,32 EUR and an average financial allocation of 398.614,56 EUR. The duration of the projects is up to 18 months. All projects are within the geographical scope of the EMIF.

**4) Actions in Support of Media Literacy**

- **28 April 2023:** 2nd call “Media and Information Literacy for Societal Resilience”

**Target:**

- Target: up to 400.000 EUR funding per project
- Target: duration of the project up to 18 months
- Target: geographical scope included EU, EEA, UK

**Achieved:**

4 projects have been approved with a total grant amount of 1.526.509,77 EUR and an average financial allocation of 381.627,44 EUR. The duration of the projects is up to 18 months. All projects are within the geographical scope of the EMIF.

**Evaluation:**

- The **EMIF programme attracted 166 applications** during this reporting period. This increase of applications submitted to the EMIF of 61% compared to the previous year is an indication for a successful outreach.
- **80 out of the 166 applications** were rated by the evaluators above the 6 points threshold, and were therefore in theory eligible for funding. This shows that the

European information ecosystem is coming up with a good number of high quality projects.

- **42 projects have been approved for funding.** This shows that the demand of funding for high quality projects set up to combat disinformation is much higher than what the EMIF is currently able to fund.
- **6.355.540,59 EUR is the total funding disbursed / to be disbursed** to these 42 projects across the 4 funding areas, including the new Fast-track call Investigations into Critical Disinformation Threats, with three topics of priority: the Israel-Hamas war, the 2024 elections for the European Parliament (EP) and the monetization of disinformation.
- From the **257.039,98 EUR of funds that have not been disbursed over the years 2022 and 2023** across funding areas 2, 3 and 4, parts have been made available for the Fast-track Investigation call, and the remaining part will be used for future calls (Management Committee meeting from 18 January 2024).
- The newly created one-off **Fast-track Investigations call was in the position to disburse 715.146,51 EUR** during this reporting period.

ii. **Assessment of the delivery mechanism in the light of being in line with the guidelines set by the programme**

- **Target:** Call for applications published on the fund's website and other media (see Art. 4 of the EMIF Implementation Framework)
- **Achieved:** All Calls for Proposal have been published in time on the EMIF website.
- **Target:** Call notice according to set criteria (see art 4.1 in the EMIF Implementation Framework)
- **Achieved:** All Calls published in the reporting period address all criteria listed in Art. 4.1 in the EMIF Implementation Framework.
- **Target:** Checking eligibility of the projects to set up the final list of admitted projects for the expert evaluators (see Art. 4.2 in the EMIF Implementation Framework)
- **Achieved:** The EMIF Secretariat checked the admissibility of the applications right after the respective Calls for Proposals closed. During the reporting period 100 out of 166 projects have been admitted by the EMIF Secretariat, not including the Fast-track Investigation projects.
- **Target:** Evaluation and selection by independent expert evaluators (see Art. 4.3 of the EMIF Implementation Framework)
- **Achieved:** The final list of admitted projects has been made accessible on the online platform to EDMO right after the EMIF Secretariat finalized the admissibility check. The expert evaluators did their evaluation and sent the results of the evaluation process to the Management Committee.

- **Target:** Decision making by Management Committee (see Art. 4 (h.iii) of the Internal Rules of the Management Committee of the EMIF)
- **Achieved:**
  - **Fact Checking Call:**
    - In the context of the 4<sup>th</sup> call (closed on 28 February 2023) the Management Committee at its meeting on 5 May 2023 reviewed the ranked list prepared by the expert evaluators and approved the selected list of proposals.
    - In the context of the 5<sup>th</sup> call (closed on 30 June 2023) the Management Committee at its meeting on 18 September 2023 reviewed the ranked list prepared by the expert evaluators and approved the selected list of proposals.
    - In the context of the 6<sup>th</sup> call (closed on 31 October 2023) the Management Committee at its meeting on 28 February 2024 reviewed the ranked list prepared by the expert evaluators and approved the selected list of proposals.
  - **Multidisciplinary Investigations on Disinformation in Europe:**
    - The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual call (closed on 28 April 2023) has been reviewed by the Management Committee on 7 August 2023 based on the ranked list prepared by the expert evaluators. The Management Committee approved the selected list of proposals.
    - The Fast-track Investigations call (closed on 5 February 2024) has been reviewed by the Management Committee on 8 March 2024 based on the ranked list prepared by expert evaluators. The Management Committee approved 5 projects from the selected list of proposals.
  - **Research into Media, Disinformation and Information Literacy:**
    - The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual call (closed on 28 April 2023) has been reviewed by the Management Committee on 7 August 2023 based on the ranked list prepared by the expert evaluators. The Management Committee approved the selected list of proposals.
  - **Media and Information Literacy for Citizens Empowerment:**
    - The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual call (closed on 28 April 2023) has been reviewed by the Management Committee on 7 August 2023 based on the ranked list prepared by the expert evaluators. The Management Committee approved the selected list of proposals.
- **Target:** Contracting: grant agreements signed
- **Achieved:** All grant agreements of the 42 projects selected during the reporting period have been signed.

In 2023/2024 the EMIF's overall average delay between the application deadline and the notification of the grant to the project is around 90 days: in the funding area "fast track investigations" it is 45 days, in the funding area "fact checking" it is 90-100 days, and in the funding areas "investigations" "research" and "media literacy" it is 104 days.

**Evaluation:**

- The **delivery mechanism** is in line with the guidelines set by the programme in the EMIF Implementation Framework.
- The **average delay** between the closing date of the Call for Proposals and the notification of the grant approval to the project was around 90 days.
- To guarantee the **independence of expert evaluators** involved in the selection process, they have signed a “Declaration of Commitment on Impartiality, Independence, Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality and Personal Data”.
- To guarantee their **independence, the members of the Management Committee** have signed a “Declaration of Commitment on Impartiality, Independence, Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality and Personal Data”.

**b. Outcome:**

Assessment of the projects and initiatives supported by the programme in the light of being in line with the objectives of the programme.

**Boosting Fact-checking Activities in Europe**

This call aims to strengthening the European fact-checking ecosystem by focusing on two priority areas: “Urgent Actions” and “Scale-up Projects”.

- **“Urgent Actions”**  
Under this category, the Fund will primarily support projects designed to increase coverage, depth, and speed of fact-checking activities by organisations that commit to producing regular flows of fact-checks.
- **Fact Checking “Scale-up”**  
The fund will support free-lance collaborations within newsrooms and/or integration of state-of-the-art technologies for content verification and media and social media monitoring.

**Investigations into Disinformation Dynamics and Fast-track Investigations**

The key aim of the regular Call Multidisciplinary Investigations on Disinformation in Europe is to address the existing knowledge gaps on the scale and scope of disinformation in Europe and gain a better understanding of the phenomenon and its impact on European audiences.

The key aim of this Fast-Track Investigations call is to urgently respond to the threats posed by disinformation in three areas: (1) the ongoing Israel - Hamas war, (2) the 2024 elections for the European Parliament, and (3) the underlying dynamics enabling the monetization of disinformation content, or on third party websites that repeatedly distribute disinformation content.

### Research for a Transparent and Resilient Information Ecosystem

This call aims at supporting wider and deep scientific studies on the disinformation phenomenon. Its key objective is to foster an inclusive approach, embedded in ambitious, trans-disciplinary, data-driven and, where relevant transnational projects.

### Media and Information Literacy for Societal Resilience

The key aim of this call is to support initiatives that enhance digital media and information literacy skills in targeted European countries or regions by improving all technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow citizens to access the media, to have a critical understanding of it and to interact with it.

#### **Evaluation:**

- All projects selected and admitted by the EMIF Secretariat in all 4 funding areas have been **evaluated by the expert evaluators** suggested by EDMO and selected by the Management Committee.
- The task of the expert evaluators is to do an evaluation of the projects' merit by scoring the **pre-set evaluation criteria**:
  - Relevance: contribution of the project's expected results to the Call's objectives.
  - Quality of content and activities: adequacy of the proposed methodologies to reach the Call objectives.
  - Project management: feasibility of the proposed project.
  - Dissemination: expected impact of the proposed project.
- The expert evaluators sent the results of the evaluation of the **eligible projects** to the Management Committee.
- From the admitted projects (not including Fast-track Investigations) **81 projects were in the winning range** with scores ranging from 6 to 9 on a range from 1-10 for all four evaluation criteria:
  - Fact-checking: across all three funding rounds (4, 5 and 6) 29 projects were in the winning range.
  - Investigations (regular call): 18 projects were in the winning range.
  - Research: 15 projects were in the winning range.
  - Media Literacy: 29 projects were in the winning range.
- These numbers are an indicator that the **EMIF has appropriate processes in place** to attract a high number of relevant projects in all funding areas, that do match the quality criteria of the fund.

#### **c. Relevance**

The EMIF aims at supporting fact-checking, investigation, research and media literacy projects, with a view to addressing the phenomenon of online disinformation in Europe and promoting, in particular, a more resilient and fact-based digital information ecosystem.

The EMIF conducts its funding activities in a way that is consistent with, and complementary to EDMO's overall mission, which is to bring together a multidisciplinary community of fact-checkers, media literacy experts, and academic researchers, in order to foster a better understanding and analysis of disinformation, in collaboration with media, civil society organisations and online platforms.

In the evaluation period 2023/2024 the fund has attracted 166 applications across the 4 funding areas including the new Fast-Track Investigations call (closed on 5 February 2024). During the reporting period 42 projects have been approved. They all ranked in the winning range 6-10 on a scale of 1-10 in the evaluators' opinions when selecting the projects. Funded entities represent a wide range of organisations, including small and bigger media outlets, academic institutions, think tank as well as CSOs.

The calls for proposals in the evaluation period of this assessment report reflect the strategic modifications in the 4 funding areas introduced in time for the launch of the calls to proposal in Spring 2023. These modifications include (a) to ensure gender balance in the projects, (b) shortening the duration of the "investigations on disinformation" funding area and instead creating a special track for follow-on research or media literacy proposals, (c) broaden the scope of the call for funding area 2 "investigations into disinformation" and better align the objectives between funding areas 2 and 3, while creating a clearer link with public policy goals, and (d) broadening the objectives of the media literacy call.

During the evaluation period the Management Committee at its meeting on 16 November 2023 decided to launch a Fast-track Investigations call in reaction to political developments impacting the disinformation ecosystem across Europe. This call is addressing disinformation related to (1) the ongoing Israel -Hamas war, (2) the 2024 elections for the European Parliament, and (3) the underlying dynamics enabling the monetization of disinformation content, or on third party websites that repeatedly distribute disinformation content. The call was launched on 22 December 2023, has been closed on 5 February 2024 and the Management Committee has approved on 8 March 2024 five projects out of 25 applications.

There is no impact framework in place to measure and assess systematically the overall impact the EMIF has through funding projects across all funding areas. In the Assessment Report 2022/23 the 3<sup>rd</sup> recommendation suggested to the EMIF to put such an impact framework in place that "provides a good understanding of how the EMIF successfully minimizes disinformation across Europe and its effectiveness in building societies that are resilient in the face of disinformation".

**Evaluation:**

- The results from the 2023/2024 evaluation proof the **EMIF's ability to unlock the potential** of organisations and individuals to come up with relevant initiatives addressing the disinformation challenge.
- The **geographical outreach of the EMIF** across 26 countries during this evaluation period indicates the reach of the EMIF's funding that goes beyond the original goal of the fund.

- The **launch of the Fast-track Investigations call** is an indication for EMIF’s ability to adjust to a changing environment by agreeing quickly on a new call, making the necessary funding available within the overall budget for this year and adjusting the evaluation and approval processes to respond to the urgency of the projects accepted.
- The **impact of the EMIF funded projects is not yet systematically measured**. Developing an impact framework for EMIF (3<sup>rd</sup> recommendation of 2022/23 Assessment Report) still needs to be developed and implemented.

## C. Internal and external communications

### Internal Communications

“Internal Communications” refers to the communications within the EMIF programme, between the governance bodies, the team and the partners involved. The Management Committee’s Internal Rules outline the timelines for sending information ahead of its meetings and in the follow up to the meeting. In the conversations with the different representatives of the EMIF programme in the context of this assessment report, there were no comments about any potential deficits in the internal communications.

### External Communications

“External Communications” refers to the communication with potential grantees, potential funders, the EMIF community, the European information ecosystem and the general public. The means of communications are the EMIF website, annual progress report, newsletters, social media, advertising, events and the partnership search directory. The objective is to increase the engagement with the key target group of the EMIF to attract more and better project applications, to increase the visibility and trust level to attract new funders and to be recognized as a relevant player in the European information ecosystem.

In this light the EMIF has achieved an increase of the number of high quality applications and has successfully grown its community over the last years. Still the communications work lacks a strategic approach. Therefore the EMIF has launched a process to develop the EMIF Comms Strategy 2024-25 to unlock the full potential of the engagement opportunities with potential grantees, potential funders, the EMIF community, the European information ecosystem and the general public.

- **Website**

The EMIF website <https://emifund.eu> has been launched on 4 October 2021 and has been constantly updated since then. It serves as primary source of information about EMIF’s calls for proposals, presents ongoing projects and provides access to the online platform for applicants to submit their proposals.

The website gives access to news, open calls, events announcements and event videos, information about the organization, its governance and team, the funding principles and information related to the grants. Furthermore it provides access to the EMIF Directory for Partner Search.

The total number of visitors has decreased from 72.133 (2021-22) via 86.486 (2022-23) to 51.734 (2023-24) p.a., but at the same time the average session duration almost

doubled from 02:45 minutes (2022-23) to 04:50 minutes (2023-24), and users viewed more pages per session: 1,97 (2022-23) to 2,9 (2023-24).

The importance of the website for generating applications is supported by data that shows a correlation between countries generating the highest website sessions and those with the greatest number of applications for EMIF calls for proposals.

- **Annual Progress Report**

The Annual Progress Report 2022-23 has been published in July 2023 and provides in an attractive and accessible layout an overview of the fund including its figures, structure and management practices, the EMIF activities, the EMIF grant areas as well as the results and impact. Furthermore the report is also sharing ongoing and future calls as well as the financial statements. It is available in print and digital format and is publicly accessible through the EMIF website.

- **Newsletter**

The EMIF has sent 7 newsletters during the reporting period. They announce the opening of funding calls, inform about EMIF events and provide updates from the EMIF community. Compared to the previous year the subscriptions went up by 135 to a total of 1140. The opening rate is with 56% stable compared to the previous reporting period and relatively high compared to average opening rates (35,63% according to [Mailchimp](#)) of email newsletters.

- **Social media**

The EMIF's social media presence has increased significantly over a range of social media channels, reflecting the increased engagement level of its core community and successful outreach to the wider community.

- [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/emifund/) EMIF profile <https://www.linkedin.com/company/emifund/> has 2.173 followers, a 187% increase compared to the year before. The EMIF uses LinkedIn to connect with professionals operating within the information ecosystem across Europe, promotes its calls and to position the EMIF as an advocate for media literacy, fact-checking research, and investigations into disinformation in Europe.
- [X \(former Twitter\)](#) @EMIF\_Fund and #EMIFund increased its followers to 1.607 over the last year (from 1.308 in the previous year). The interactions and impressions vary with the announcement of open calls and events. X remains a relevant engagement platform for EMIF and its wider community.

- **Advertising**

While in the previous year the EMIF ran an online advertising campaign (Q1 2023) around the launch of calls for proposals in its three main areas of intervention with the aim to increase traffic on the EMIF website, there was no such campaign during this reporting period. This might also explain the decrease of number of visitors on the website during the reporting period of this assessment report. Still the number of applications increased significantly.

- **Events**

Events are an important format for the EMIF to expand its network and engagement within the wider European information ecosystem. Therefore the EMIF has participated actively at a number of events as well as organized and hosted its own physical and online gatherings throughout 2023-24.

- Fighting Misinformation Online (FMO) series

The EMIF actively participated in three FMO events, cohosted by both fund partners, EUI and CGF:

- Strengthening Media Literacy in Central and Eastern Europe in Bratislava/Slovakia in June 2023
- FMO Event in Brussels/Belgium in October 2023
- FMO Summit on Elections 2024 in Brussels/Belgium in March 2024

- State of the Union (SOU) – EUI

The event took place in Florence/Italy with 700 participants in May 2023. The EMIF held a panel discussion titled “Europe’s Digital Future”.

- EMIF Summer Event

In June 2023 the EMIF held this event in Brussels/Belgium, titled “Countering Disinformation During the Rise of AI: Reflecting on 2 Years of EMIF’s Impact”

- EMIF Autumn Event

On 16 and 17 November 2023, EMIF hosted its yearly flagship event in Florence/Italy with the specific focus of fostering “Community Building Against Disinformation”. Around 100 participants joined this event.

- AGORA EU: “Democracy – Youth in Action”

EMIF presented its activities at this event, organised by Erasmus+ Network at the CGF in Lisbon/Portugal in December 2023.

- Voices Festival

The inaugural edition of the Voices Festival, the European Festival of Journalism and Media Literacy, with 1.300 participants held in March 2024 in Florence/Italy was co-sponsored by EMIF. EMIF showcased its positive impact on combatting disinformation by presenting six of its funded projects and by participating in panel discussions.

- EMIF online information sessions

During the reporting period EMIF held two online information sessions. On 15 January 2024 the session had 73 participants and focused on the fast-track Call for Proposals on Critical Disinformation Threats under Investigations into Disinformation area of intervention. On 27 March 2024 the session had 191 participants and focused on the annual 2024 Open Calls. The recordings of these sessions are available on the EMIF website.

- **Partnership Search Directory**

To foster knowledge-sharing and facilitate the creation of European networks in the ecosystem of fact-checking, debunking disinformation and research, the EMIF initiated

the development of a directory of entities which is today accessible on the Fund's website. This directory is an opportunity to expand the community along the funding lines and could potentially serve as a springboard for scaling up projects funded by the EMIF.

#### **Evaluation:**

- The **internal communications** of the EMIF programme meet the standards set by the founding organizations. There is no information about insufficient communication within the organization.
- The **external communications** has developed in terms of reach and positioned the EMIF within the European information ecosystem. It meets the ambition of the Management Committee to be fully transparent with all information related to the Calls for Proposals, the selection criteria, the selection process and sharing information publicly about all selected projects, their objectives and the related funding volume on the website. This approach is building trust in the community and is leading to more and better applications as well as acknowledgement regarding the positive impact that the EMIF has on combatting disinformation.
- The EMIF has identified the need to **approach the external communications more strategically** in order to unlock the full potential of the engagement opportunities, building on the rich and unique stories emerging with the projects funded as well as drawing more attention on the impact of the EMIF. The EMIF Comms Strategy 2024-25 should indeed build on the excellent work that has been done so far and make more insightful content available (blog posts, videos) as well as aim for a publicly accessible repository of the projects as a learning opportunity and inspiration for the ecosystem.
- The **website** <https://emifund.eu> is the key access to all relevant information and updates on the EMIF, including the calls for proposals, the projects funded and the activities and events of the EMIF. The data confirms the correlation between number of website visitors and project applications per country. The website will therefore play a very important engagement role also in the future of the EMIF.
- 7 issues of the **newsletter** have been sent throughout the year and the subscriptions increased to 1.140 subscribers throughout the evaluation period. The newsletter has opening rates significantly over average opening rates of email newsletters which confirms the relevance and uniqueness of the content shared by the EMIF with its community.
- The **social media** activities of the EMIF are increasing the engagement with the core target group. In particular LinkedIn helps to build and maintain the EMIF community.
- The **increasing presence of the EMIF at events** organized and hosted by third parties as well as the significant number of participants at online and physical events organized and hosted by EMIF reflect the successful positioning of EMIF in the European information ecosystem over the last years. EMIF has become an acknowledged voice at the table and has highly relevant and unique insights to share related to combatting disinformation.

#### D. Robustness of the programme

This assessment report looks at the “robustness of the programme” through a variety of lenses that are considered as relevant for the sustainable impact of the programme on fighting disinformation.

- **Driving change**

The EMIF is entrusted with an objective of public interest as it aims to bring to an end the erosion of trust in reliable information sources and strengthens the democratic process. Its funding areas ultimately help citizens to differentiate fact from fiction and make well-informed choices.

To safeguard our democratic societies, it is crucial to raise awareness about disinformation, promote media literacy, and foster an environment where accurate and verified information can thrive.

In the EMIF Implementation Framework it says in Art 2 that the programme needs to attract proposals that are innovative (no “business-as-usual” projects) and have a multiplier effect (e.g. scalable approaches to disinformation detection, analysis and exposure; networked knowledge exchanges; solid dissemination plans that foster information sharing and follow-on research).

Furthermore the programme is operating under the scientific guidance of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO). EDMO advises on the evaluation process and selects experts to serve as evaluators, ensuring complete independence and relevant competence for each of the EMIF’s intervention areas.

Looking at the projects selected throughout the evaluation period in the four funding areas, the EMIF was able to select 42 projects across 26 countries within its geographical scope: all 27 EU Member States, the EEA member countries and UK. According to the expert evaluators’ evaluation reports for each project, all selected projects are innovative and have a multiplier effect, in line with the criteria mentioned in Art 2 in the EMIF Implementation Framework.

The organizations funded by the EMIF are keen to be innovative in the way they are addressing the challenge of disinformation in cross-border and cross-sector approaches. In its 3<sup>rd</sup> year of existence the EMIF has in total funded 81 projects across all funding areas. Without the EMIF funding, some of the project partners would have not made available their skills and technology solutions for the fight against disinformation. Also the media and information ecosystem would not have reached today’s maturity level in fighting disinformation, which is reflected by the transparency of projects realized across the field, the level of information sharing between organisations combatting disinformation, the collaborative approach incentivized by the design of the EMIF calls for proposals and the role of the EMIF in amplifying publicly the findings of the many projects.

The EMIF has therefore built successfully the capacities of the ecosystem to address the disinformation challenge in a more structured and collaborative way.

- **Attracting the most promising solutions addressing the challenge of disinformation**

The EMIF's approach recognizes the complexity and scale of the challenge that disinformation poses on our democratic society.

EDMO's Scientific Focus provides a framework to guide the scientific priorities of the EMIF's interventions in all relevant areas, with a view to addressing the phenomenon of online disinformation in Europe. Moreover, based on EDMO's Scientific Focus, EDMO's Advisory Board sets the scientific priorities for the EMIF's interventions in funding "Boosting Fact-checking across Europe", "Investigations into Disinformation Dynamics", "Research for a Transparent and Resilient Information Ecosystem", and "Media and Information Literacy for Societal Resilience".

Building on its achievements over the first 2 years of the EMIF, during this 3<sup>rd</sup> year the EMIF was able to fund solutions that are highly innovative, collaborative across borders and sectors, follow the co-design approach, offer the potential to be scaled across Europe, and address the specific needs of specific societal groups, like youngsters, rural population etc..

- **Learning capacity**

The EMIF in its third year continued to learn and adjust its approach across the four different funding areas, such as eliminating the follow-on project possibility and including climate-related topics for its undeniable relevance (area 2), emphasizing the trans-disciplinary and trans-national approaches in the selection criteria section of the call (area 3), as well as emphasizing the need for projects that address the elder part of the population and dropping the reference to gamification, since there are sufficient projects in this genre (area 4).

Setting up the "Fast-track Investigations" call within a few weeks between November 2023 and December 2023 with the necessary funding as well as the adjusted communications, application and evaluation processes in place is a strong indication for the ability of the EMIF to learn and adjust in the light of fast and relevant political developments.

- **Building trust with stakeholders involved**

In its third year the EMIF is a well-established and a trusted player in the field of combatting disinformation in Europe. This is reflected, for example, by the number of applications: the EMIF has received 166 applications during the reporting period across all four funding areas, a significant increase compared to the year before.

Furthermore the EMIF has been invited to a wide range of conferences and events to speak, host panels and be the expert voice for combatting disinformation in Europe.

The high trust level of the EMIF can be explained by the fact that it is co-hosted by two very reputable institutions, the European University Institute and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the professionalism of people involved in the governance, the knowledgeable evaluators involved in the evaluation of the projects, the organizational policies in place – for example conflict of interest policy – and the transparency created through the website, public newsletters, and the regularly published annual progress report and external assessment report.

Also the events the EMIF is organizing in summer and fall of each year aim to build the community of trusted peers.

#### Evaluation:

- The EMIF's mission is to fight the erosion of democracy. This requires to not only stay on top of new tech developments but also new actors, new themes and new dynamics. The EMIF has **successfully build its organization as a connector that drives change** in approaching disinformation.
- The EMIF is **building the capacity of the European media and information ecosystem** to address the complexity of disinformation. With 81 projects funded since its launch the EMIF is touching the information ecosystems in 26 countries and leveraging knowledge exchange, innovation and collaboration.
- The EMIF has **increased the maturity of the community fighting disinformation** across Europe, by providing spaces for networking, meaningful engagement and building a deeper and more holistic understanding of the disinformation issue and how to combat it.
- In the third year of its operations the EMIF showed again its **ability to adjust to new needs and changes**: the introduction of the Fast-track Investigation call was not only a timely programmatic reaction but also a proof case for accelerating the evaluation and approval process for this urgent call.
- Overall the **EMIF has built successfully trust across the field** and is recognized as a relevant convener, amplifier and ecosystem builder for the community of actors combatting disinformation across Europe.

## 5. Conclusions

Since the EMIF has been set up on 25 March 2021 the phenomenon of disinformation has gained additional momentum through generative AI providing cheap and fast opportunities to create misleading and fake content, evolving Large Language Models (LLMs) generating and spreading huge quantities of false or misleading information that can influence people's beliefs and behaviors, and rising geopolitical tensions creating fertile ground for systematic and large scale disinformation campaigns as part of hybrid warfare. At the same time the news environment is changing dramatically with more and more editorial newsrooms being closed across Europe, professional journalistic content not reaching the young generation any more through traditional news channels, and disinformation being used by populist parties as a strategy to accelerate the polarization of democratic societies. The recent elections across Europe are proof points for this dynamic.

With some inaugural funding by Google of 25.000.000 EUR for a period of 5 years and the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) agreeing to provide scientific advice to the Fund, on the condition that it would be allowed to perform its role in complete independence from the Fund and its donors, the EMIF has been set up by two strong and reputable institutions: the

European University Institute (EUI) and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (CGF). The EMIF's mission is to stabilize democracy by debunking disinformation, amplifying independent fact-checking and enable targeted research and innovation tools designed to strengthen resilience, and the ecosystems response to disinformation.

Therefore this assessment report is looking into how the EMIF managed to live up to its objective during its third year, starting on 25 March 2023 and ending on 24 March 2024. The evaluator had access to all relevant information related to the 2023/2024 year of operations. This third year assessment report is building on the findings of the first and second assessment reports that have been presented at the EMIF's Annual Conference in December 2022 and June 2023 respectively.

During the evaluation period the EMIF has received 166 applications across all four funding areas and has selected 42 projects engaging lead partners across 26 countries within the geographical scope of the programme:

- 21 in the 1<sup>st</sup> funding area "Fact Checking",
- 8 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> funding area "Investigations on Disinformation"
- 4 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> funding area "Research into media, disinformation and information literacy"
- 4 in the 4<sup>th</sup> funding area "Media and information literacy"
- and 5 in the Fast-track Investigations call as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> funding area.

For these 42 projects a total budget of 6.355.540,59 EUR has been assigned during the evaluation period.

From the overall assessment this report draws the following conclusions:

#### **1. Conclusion: The EMIF has a robust and now complete governance in place**

During the reporting period the constituting partners of the EMIF, CGF and EUI, launched the process of setting up the Steering Committee that had its first meeting on 7 May 2024 (outside the reporting period of this assessment report). In the agreement establishing the European Media and Information Fund, signed by the CGF and the EUI, Article 4.2 foresees the set-up of a Steering Committee that has the role to provide general guidance and oversight to the Management Committee.

The robustness of the existing governance structure is reflected in the consistency of the work of the Management Committee throughout this reporting period, when two out of three members of the Management Committee have been replaced as reflected in the updated Internal Rules, adopted by the Management Committee on 8 March 2024. The handover process between the retiring and incoming members of the Management Committee was smooth and had no impact on the processes of approving projects for funding within the given timeframes.

Existing governance documents were fit for purpose, as they allowed the Management Committee to launch the new and timely Fast-track Investigations call in January 2024, and to provide the flexibility for adjustments of the rules for the calls to ensure quality submissions also in the future.

## 2. Conclusion: The EMIF's processes live up to the specific needs of the fund

When the Management Committee launched the new Fast-track Investigations call in January 2024 this was not only a timely programmatic reaction but also a proof case for accelerating the evaluation and approval process for this urgent call.

While the average delay between the deadline of the call and the approval of the projects is around 100 days, at this call the interplay between the EMIF Secretariat, the evaluators appointed by EDMO and the EMIF's Management Committee approving the projects for funding made it possible to reduce this delay to 45 days.

The professional handling of the evaluation and selection process, even with an accelerated timeline for specific parts of the funding programme, is a proof that the EMIF has successfully put processes in place that fulfill the needs of the fund.

## 3. Conclusion: The EMIF reacts to the challenges arising from political developments

Only 6 weeks following the Hamas attacks on Israel, the EMIF Management Committee decided to launch the Fast-track Investigations call, addressing disinformation related to (1) the ongoing Israel-Hamas war, (2) the 2024 elections for the European Parliament, and (3) the underlying dynamics enabling the monetization of disinformation through advertisements placed on online platforms interfaces next to disinformation content, or on third party websites that repeatedly distribute disinformation content.

The EMIF's ability to adjust to the changing environment by agreeing quickly on a new call, making the necessary funding at the level of 715.146,51 EUR available within the overall budget for this year and adjusting the evaluation and approval processes to respond to the urgency of the projects accepted, is a remarkable proof point of the effectiveness of the fund.

The call triggered 25 applications out of which five projects have been selected for funding with an average funding of 143.029,30 EUR per project.

## 4. Conclusion: The EMIF built an increasingly mature community combatting disinformation

EMIF makes non-partisan funding available for projects debunking disinformation, amplifying independent fact-checking and enabling targeted research and innovation tools designed to strengthen resilience as well as the ecosystem's response to disinformation. Throughout the three years of its existence the EMIF has funded 81 projects across 26 countries.

Without the EMIF funding, some of the project partners would have not made available their skills and technology solutions for the fight against disinformation. Also the media and information ecosystem would not have reached today's maturity level in fighting disinformation. While many of the actors behind these projects did not know each other, had no incentive to collaborate, to share insights and to learn together, the EMIF's funding and convening role helped building a community of dedicated and tech avers actors that share the mission to combat disinformation through a wide spectrum of complementary approaches.

By today this community has reached a relevant maturity level that is characterized by regular convenings, a growing network of trusted relationships, a good understanding of actors and projects in this field, and a safe space for exchanging knowledge and joint learning.

Since there is no impact framework in place that allows to measure impact of the project funded by the EMIF in a systematic way, there is a lack of direction on how to support this community to increase its impact in a coordinated and effective way.

Based on the findings of the assessment report, this report also takes the opportunity to provide some recommendations to the EMIF:

**1. Recommendation: Introduce impact framework for EMIF**

The EMIF should take the opportunity to understand better how its funding successfully minimizes disinformation across Europe and therefore is effective in building societies that are resilient in the face of disinformation. Developing an impact measurement methodology that can be applied across all projects funded by EMIF by an independent expert will be valuable to provide transparency about EMIF's funding effectiveness and sheds light on potential levers for enhanced impact across the European information ecosystem.

**2. Recommendation: Implement innovative communications strategy**

Following the EMIF's identification of the need to approach its external communications more strategically the fund should now implement its innovative communications strategy 2024-25, to unlock the full potential of the EMIF's engagement opportunities with potential grantees, potential funders, the EMIF community, the European information ecosystem and the general public.

**3. Recommendation: Attract new funders**

The EMIF has the ambition to become a multi-donor fund to complement the existing inaugural contribution of Google and extend the fund's duration beyond March 2026. This should become the main task of the Steering Committee with the ambition to continue incentivizing innovation and collaboration for resilient democracies across Europe and beyond, while building the long-term resilience of the fund that has such a crucial role to play in maintaining and building resilient democracies.

**4. Recommendation: Enlarge membership of the Steering Committee**

The newly set up Steering Committee should invite new members to join. In the light of the third recommendation some of these new members should have the ability to bring new funders to the EMIF due to their public profile and/or trusted relationships to potential funders.

Brussels, 11 July 2024



Max von Abendroth

## ANNEX:

### The documents consulted for this assessment include:

- EMIF 2023 – 2024 draft Annual Progress Report
- Agreement establishing the European Media and Information Fund, signed by CGF and EUI
- EMIF Governance Charter
- EMIF Management Committee Internal Rules
- EMIF Implementation Framework
- Minutes of the Management Committee meetings during the reporting period
- Declaration of Commitment on Impartiality, Independence, Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality and Personal Data – signed by the members of the Management Committee
- Declaration of Commitment on Impartiality, Independence, Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality and Personal Data – signed by expert evaluators
- Calls for Proposals for all calls issued during the reporting period
- EDMO Scientific Focus
- Grant Agreements
- Evaluators' reports for all projects admitted by the EMIF Secretariat