

Code of Practice on
Disinformation – Report
of Demagog Association
for the period January
2024 - June 2024

Executive summary

Executive summary (max. 2 pages)

Demagog Association is the first Polish fact-checking organization. Since 2014 we work on fact-checking politicians' statements, verifying their promises and debunking false information. Our main goal is to improve the quality of public debate by providing citizens with unbiased and reliable information. Since 2019 we are certified member of the International Fact-Checking Network and partner to the Meta's Third-Party Fact-Checking Program. We are the signatory to the 2022 European Code of Practice on Disinformation. Since 2023 we are certified member of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network and partner to the TikTok's Global Fact-Checking Program. Since 2024 we are also member of the Central European Digital Media Observatory (CEDMO) Hub.

Guidelines for filling out the report

Crisis and elections reporting template

Relevant signatories are asked to provide proportionate and appropriate information and data during a period of crisis and during an election. Reporting is a part of a special chapter at the end of the harmonised reporting template and should follow the guidelines:

- The reporting of signatories' actions should be as specific to the particular crisis or election reported on as possible. To this extent, the rows on "Specific Action[s]" should be filled in with actions that are either put in place specifically for a particular event (for example a media literacy campaign on disinformation related to the Ukraine war, an information panel for the European elections), or to explain in more detail how an action that forms part of the service's general approach to implementing the Code is implemented in the specific context of the crisis or election reported on (for example, what types of narratives in a particular election/crisis would fall into scope of a particular policy of the service, what forms of advertising are ineligible).
- Signatories who are not offering very large online platform services and who follow the invitation to report on their specific actions for a particular election or crisis may adapt the reporting template as follows:
 - They may remove the "Policies and Terms and Conditions" section of the template, or use it to report on any important changes in their internal rules applicable to a particular election or crisis (for example, a change in editorial guidelines for fact-checkers specific to the particular election or crisis)
 - They may remove any Chapter Section of the Reporting Template (Scrutiny of Ads Placement, Political Advertising, Integrity of Services etc.) that is not relevant to their activities
- The harmonised reporting template should be filled in by adding additional rows for each item reported on. This means that rather than combined/bulk reporting such as "Depending on severity of violation, we demote or remove content based on policies X, Y, Z", there should be individual rows stating for example "Under Policy X, content is demoted or removed based on severity", "Under Policy Y, content [...]" etc.
- The rows should be colour-coded to indicate which service is being reported on, using the same colour code as for the overall harmonised reporting template.

Reporting should be brief and to the point, with a suggested character limit entry of 2000 characters.

Uploading data to the Transparency Centre

The reports should be submitted to the Commission in the form of the pdf via e-mail to the address CNECT COP TASK FORCE CNECT-COP-TASK-FORCE@ec.europa.eu within the agreed deadline. Signatories will upload all data from the harmonised reporting template to the Transparency Centre, allowing easy data access and filtering within the agreed deadline. It is the responsibility of the signatories to ensure that the uploading takes place and is executed on time. Signatories are also responsible to ensure that the Transparency Centre is operational and functional by the time of the reports' submission that the data from the reports are uploaded and made accessible in the Transparency Centre within the above deadline, and that users are able to read, search, filter and download data as needed in a user-friendly way and format.

Reporting on the signatory's response during an election

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2024 European Parliament Elections

Threats observed during the electoral period:

During the reporting period, two election campaigns took place in Poland. Apart from the European elections in June, Polish local elections were organized in early April. Due to this particular national context, the nature of political debate in Poland seamlessly transitioned from a local focus to issues related to the European Union. This meant that Poland experienced a prolonged campaign period that lasted from February all the way to the European elections in June.

The challenges related to these two election campaigns differed. In local elections, due to their scale, insufficient fact-checking at the local level was one of the most relevant issues. No significant disinformation campaigns related to local elections were observed.

Regarding the European elections, disinformation narratives focused on specific EU policies and political agendas, rather than undermining election integrity. We can highlight a few examples of such narratives:

- **EPBD:** Disinformation narratives regarding the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive were present in the public debate on a large scale. Claims that Poles would be expropriated from their homes due to the enforcement of the measures in the Directive were propagated mainly by right-wing politicians.
- **Migration Pact:** With the approval of the new Migration and Asylum Pact, discussion regarding the potential legal consequences of this document quickly erupted. Right-wing politicians from parties like Konfederacja or Suwerenna Polska claimed that Poland would be forced to accept migrants or pay 20,000 EUR, without providing additional context regarding other measures and policies within the legal framework. It was also claimed that these new migration policies were the result of countries like Spain, Italy, Germany, and France wanting to shift or "export" their own problems to more stable countries like Poland.
- **Green Deal:** Narratives regarding issues like food imports from outside the EU were spread concerning the EU Green Deal. Politicians claimed that the EU Green Deal would lead to the destruction not only of domestic agriculture and food production in Poland, but also in the EU overall. In more radical cases, it aligned with climate change denial.

We assess that the majority of EU-related disinformation during the European election campaign period originated domestically and was disseminated for the political purposes of specific candidates and parties.

Mitigations in place during the electoral period:

Demagog Association has prioritized the election-related disinformation within the scope of its fact-checking partnerships with very large online platforms - Meta and TikTok.

We were part of the EFCSN's Elections24Check project supported by the Google News Initiative. As one of the most active participants, we have submitted 267 fact-checks to the repository, focusing on various EU-related issues.

In order to overcome the challenges related with the limited scope and reach of our activities, we have partnered with the Google News Initiative to organize two fact-checking hackathons for journalists, activists and concerned citizens. The concept was to promote the idea of fact-checking, share our expertise and know-how and also increase the reach of our work.

The first hackathon before the local elections was joined by more than 60 participants, from 19 different media outlets. Together, they have produced 75 fact-checking articles.

The second hackathon before the European elections was also joined by more than 60 participants from 10 different media outlets. They have produced 14 articles.

As a member of the Central European Digital Media Observatory Hub we were involved in producing regional briefs on current disinformation trends related to the European elections. We have also shared our insights with other members of fact-checking community within the European Fact-Checking Standards Network, the International Fact-Checking Network, as a member of Elections Working Group in the Code of Practice Permanent Task-Force and with other stakeholders.

[Note: Signatories are requested to provide information relevant to their particular response to the threats and challenges they observed on their service(s). They ensure that the information below provides an accurate and complete report of their relevant actions. As operational responses to crisis/election situations can vary from service to service, an absence of information should not be considered a priori a shortfall in the way a particular service has responded. Impact metrics are accurate to the best of signatories' abilities to measure them].

Empowering the Fact-Checking Community

Outline approaches pertinent to this chapter, highlighting similarities/commonalities and differences with regular enforcement.

Commitment 33

Additional projects and activities

Demagog Association was involved in two major projects related to the elections period in Poland.

- **Elections24Check project:** The Elections24Check project aimed at increasing cross-country collaboration in detecting and debunking European electoral disinformation across the EU while promoting the access of European citizens to verified information so they could make informed decisions in the lead up to the European Elections in June 2024. It leveraged the collective expertise of European fact-checking organisations that are verified members of the European Code of Standards for Independent Fact-Checking Organisations. Elections24Check was a joint project of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network and its participating member organisations, supported by the Google News Initiative. Over 40 fact-checking organizations participated in the project.
- **Fact-checking hackathons:** Demagog Association with the support of the Google News Initiative have organized two hackathons for journalists, activists, students and concerned citizens before local and European elections. The concept was to promote the idea of fact-checking, share our expertise and know-how and also increase the reach of our work. Those events supported the fact-checking empowerment of local journalists by increasing their fact-checking capabilities.

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