

Code of Practice on
Disinformation – Report of
FIDU – Federazione Italiana
Diritti Umani for the period
between 1st January and 31st
December 2023

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Executive summary

FIDU operates worldwide with the mission to protect human rights, the rule of law and the victims of abuses. FIDU's work mostly focuses on initiatives like advocacy and awareness campaigns, fact-finding missions, monitoring activities, especially related to elections and trials, and reporting of abuses. To conduct this work, FIDU relies on its wide international network, composed of CSOs, universities, media workers, lawyers, and experts with whom FIDU supports the reform of traditional mechanisms in order to make them more effective in protecting human rights and to promote new tools aimed to fight against impunity and to protect the victims of abuses, including those targeted by transnational repression. In this context, FIDU recognises disinformation as a major threat to human rights and the rule of law, which often targets the victims of abuses and those who work to protect them.

FIDU's work to counter disinformation includes raising awareness on the disinformation phenomenon and its impact on our information ecosystem and the consequence on free media, academia, democratic processes, and civil society, as well as analysis and monitoring of narratives coming from authoritarian countries.

FIDU is currently implementing 2 European projects under the CERV Programme of the European Commission. In this framework, FIDU is actively promoting media literacy skills among citizens, including vulnerable and marginalized groups, with the aim of strengthening and protecting democracy and the core values of the EU. This is done by providing workshops, trainings and conducting focus groups. Additionally, a part of these activities is implemented in the framework of the upcoming European Elections.

These efforts are conducted along with advocacy initiatives addressed to national and international institutions and the participation to a number of public events on disinformation.

FIDU's work on disinformation is also focused on the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. In line with these ongoing efforts, FIDU frequently collaborates with its Ukrainian partners in order to organise events aimed at raising awareness on the reality of the war and reporting pro-kremlin narratives.

In November 2023, FIDU joined the Code of Practice on Disinformation where it is active in 2 subgroups: Crisis Response and Outreach and Integration of New Signatories.

V. Empowering Users

Commitment 17

In light of the European Commission's initiatives in the area of media literacy, including the new Digital Education Action Plan, Relevant Signatories commit to continue and strengthen their efforts in the area of media literacy and critical thinking, also with the aim to include vulnerable groups.

Measure 17.1				
QRE 17.1.1	In 2023, FIDU has continued to promote the MLFD Booklet , produced within the Media Literacy For Democracy project. The booklet is a tool available online whose objective is to help citizens recognising and countering disinformation. The Booklet is constantly updated by FIDU and serves as baseline for its media literacy activities. ^[1] _[SEP]			
SLI 17.1.1 - actions enforcing policies above	Engagement and interactions with the tool.			
	Total count of the tool's impressions	Interactions/ engagement with the tool		
Data	N/A	650: stakeholders and participants engaged in the activities (EU)		
Measure 17.2				
QRE 17.2.1	<p>Among the main activities implemented by FIDU during this reporting period in the area of media literacy and digital education, incl. vulnerable and marginalised groups, there are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make your Vote World Café held online in February 2023. It engaged more than 100 participants from 11 European countries on the discussion around the active participation of young people in democratic life and elections, and raised awareness on the major obstacles, like disinformation, to civic participation. - Five 3-day focus groups coordinated by FIDU and held from January to May 2023 in Italy, Ireland, Spain, Bulgaria and Poland. They involved citizens aged between 18 and 35 years with the aim to raise awareness on mis- and disinformation and equipped 			

	<p>them with the knowledge and skills necessary to critically evaluate information sources and navigate the digital landscape effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make your Vote workshop held in Rome at “Europe Experience - David Sassoli” centre (managed by the European Commission representation in Italy) in May 2023 with the aim to promote a bottom-up approach and invite citizens to take part in activities and debates concerning the future of the EU and its major threats like disinformation and foreign interference. - Media Literacy for Democracy international workshop in Rome (Italy) held in June 2023 by FIDU in collaboration with Luiss Data Lab – School of Journalism/ IDMO. The event brought citizens into conversations about the various factors contributing to the spread of disinformation, as well as about policy initiatives, research, and potential strategies to promote the future of media literacy in the EU. Students, professionals, and scientists, from across the EU exchanged ideas about the role that governments, media workers, CSOs, and online platforms play in this major challenge. - Media Literacy for Democracy International Workshop in Szczecin (Poland) hosted by the University of Szczecin at the Institute of Political Science and Security in October 2023. It provided a platform for young citizens from different EU countries to engage in discussions on various factors contributing to the proliferation of disinformation and exchange insights on the current political and social initiatives aimed to counter it, with a focus on disadvantaged citizens. - Media Literacy for Democracy International Workshop in Madrid (Spain) hosted by Fundación Alternativas in collaboration with the University Rey Juan Carlos I in November 2023. It brought citizens from different EU countries into the conversation about the various factors contributing to the spread of disinformation, as well as policy initiatives and potential strategies to promote the future of media literacy in the EU. A panel of qualified experts communicated ways to raise awareness about disinformation, current techniques in tackling foreign interference, and the role of journalism in separating fact from fiction.
<p>SLI 17.2.1 - actions enforcing policies above</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of participants in the activities - Number of countries (Member States)

	Nr of media literacy/ awareness raising activities organised/ participated in	Reach of campaigns	Nr of participants	Nr of interactions with online assets	Nr of Member States
Data	10	N/A	365	N/A	7
Measure 17.3					
QRE 17.3.1	<p>For the above-reported activities FIDU partnered with media literacy experts, especially from Member State universities, EDMO Ireland, the Italian Digital Media Observatory (IDMO), the Italian Communications Authority (Agcom). CSOs with relevant expertise in media literacy and inclusion of vulnerable groups also participated.</p> <p>Additionally, the EEAS – East StratCom Task Force as well as representatives of Europe Direct were also involved in the events.</p>				
VIII. Transparency Centre					
Commitment 36					
Signatories commit to updating the relevant information contained in the Transparency Centre in a timely and complete manner.					
Measure 36.1					
QRE 36.1.1 (for the Commitments 34-36)	As qualitative reporting elements and service level indicators are essential for full compliance with the code, FIDU remains committed to meeting them accordingly.				

SLI 36.1.1 - (for Measures 34 and 36) meaningful quantitative information on the usage of the Transparency Centre, such as the average monthly visits of the webpage [change wording if adapted]	N/A
Data	N/A

IX. Permanent Task-Force	
Commitment 37	
<p>Signatories commit to participate in the permanent Task-force. The Task-force includes the Signatories of the Code and representatives from EDMO and ERGA. It is chaired by the European Commission, and includes representatives of the European External Action Service (EEAS). The Task-force can also invite relevant experts as observers to support its work. Decisions of the Task-force are made by consensus. [change wording if adapted]</p>	
Measure 37.1	
Measure 37.2	
QRE 37.6.1	FIDU is active in 2 subgroups. Namely Crisis Response and Outreach and Integration of New Signatories.

Reporting on the service's response during a period of crisis

Reporting on the service's response during a crisis

War of aggression by Russia on Ukraine

The current Russian war of aggression against Ukraine shows that disinformation is playing an active role both in the war and in the right of citizens to access information. FIDU's analysis shows that most of the Kremlin narratives that have been identified in the EU from February 2022, have appeared also before the invasion. The repetitive use – over the years – of the same pro-Kremlin narratives have made them part of our common speech. The key element of the contemporary Russian propaganda is aimed to confusing rather than convince the public opinion.

When it comes to the narratives, specifically in the framework of the invasion, FIDU has identified those aimed to justify the Russian aggression:

- Ukrainians committed genocide in Donbas (this is still a persistent narrative although the ICJ ruled that no genocide was taking place and ordered Russia to withdraw).
- Ukrainian government is neo-Nazi
- NATO's expansion is threatening Russia
- Russian-speaking population in Ukraine is in favor of Putin's war.

In addition, FIDU has identified a large diffusion of other narratives aimed to affect our support of Ukraine:

- Sanctions against Russia are useless, they don't help Ukraine but only affect the sanctioning countries
- Ensuring the emergence of a new life on the Russian occupied territories with a better quality of life
- Ukrainian weapons are sold on black market to the terrorists
- Italy and the EU should not be involved in a war that the US wants to fight for its own interest.

Russian propaganda penetrates because it finds fertile ground, which often is linked to a low quality information (media ecosystem). In fact, The Kremlin narratives are in many cases carried out in our media through simplifications or a lack of fact check. Another cause of vulnerability is a lack of contextualization - when news come from the Russian outlets or from independent journalists who are in the occupied territories without mentioning that any work conducted there is under the surveillance of the occupiers.

The use of wrong terms, example: "the crisis in Ukraine" is part of Russian propaganda language to blur roles of aggressor and victim. This encourages a wrong concept of peace.

FIDU's work to counter disinformation in the context of the war of aggression by Russia on Ukraine includes:

- Analysis of the modus operandi used by foreign actors: tactics (social media, fake accounts and state-run outlets disseminated fake news), targets, and goals
- Raise awareness of the disinformation/misinformation/ manipulation

- Promote activities based on cross-sector cooperation able to empower civil society, media workers, Universities.
 All the activities are addressed by always keeping in mind the need to balance the right to free expression of thought, the right to be informed, and the protection of democracy and the rule of law from disrupting the public debate.

During the reporting period, FIDU conducted various activities, including hosting conferences in Member States Institutions, publishing articles, and participating in expert roundtables. These activities aimed to disseminate knowledge, facilitate discussion, and foster collaboration among stakeholders in order to improve the Member States' response to the crisis.

[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 Users

Specific Action applied
 (with reference to the Code's relevant Commitment and Measure)

All activities implemented under the European project "Media Literacy for Democracy" have a specific focus on addressing the disinformation phenomenon within the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. As part of this framework, a set of policy recommendations will be published by the end of March. These recommendations aim to provide guidance and strategies for policymakers, media practitioners, and civil society actors to effectively combat disinformation and promote media literacy in the face of ongoing challenges.

Total reach of the project activities: 4000 participants (direct and indirect)

Reporting on the service's response during an election

Reporting on the service's response during an election

European Elections

Empowering Users

Specific Action applied
(with reference to the Code's relevant Commitment and Measure)

FIDU is implementing a project in partnership with seven European countries (BG, IT, PL, HR, ES, PT, GR) under the CERV Program of the European Commission aimed at raising awareness of common EU values and encouraging the participation of young people and first-time voters in Europe's democratic life. Disinformation is recognized as one of the major obstacles to civic participation and low voter turnout. In this context, the project's activities, including World Café sessions, local simulations, international skills training, and an international youth debate, have helped to strengthen democratic participation by enhancing necessary skills and creating tools for young people to effectively engage in public and civic life.

Among these activities, the [Guide with Participatory Tools for Active Citizenship](#) has been published online with informative sections on the digital tools and spaces for civic participation in the EU.

The total reach across the EU: 505 direct and 3000 indirect participants.