Code of Practice on Disinformation – Report of Faktograf for the period January 1 – December 31 2024

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Executive summary

Executive summary (max. 2 pages)

Faktograf – Association for the Informed Public is a non-profit media organisation in Croatia that publishes Faktograf.hr - online media outlet specialised in fact-checking and, since March 2024, Klimatski.hr - a new media outlet focused on climate issues.

Faktograf is a verified member of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network and the International Fact-Checking Network, as well as the founding member of SEE Check - the network of 6 fact-checkers in South East Europe.

During 2024 Faktograf became the first media publisher in Croatia to be awarded the certificate from the Journalism Trust Initiative.

Faktograf.hr and Klimatski.hr are registered as electronic publications with the Agency for Electronic Media in Croatia.

Faktograf is interested in public policies relevant for misinformation and disinformation, transparency and access to data and knowledge, good governance and democracy, as well as an enabling environment for viable journalism in the public interest, and as such is registered in the Transparency Register under ID 521295644592-54.

Faktograf is a signatory of the Code of Practice on Disinformation since June 15, 2022.

…

During 2024 Croatia organised three elections: for the European and the Croatian Parliament, as well as for the Croatian President, with informal campaigning for local elections in May 2025.

The contents, actors and channels of communications were saturated with political pre-election content, but lacking trustworthy information and abundant with misinformation and disinformation. As expected, this correlated with the growth of online harassment against journalists and fact-checkers.

Faktograf focused its activities on providing trustworthy information and debunking misinformation and disinformation to citizens in Croatia. Additionally, Faktograf engaged in promoting digital media literacy and protecting its journalists from harassment. Faktograf strengthened its cooperation with fact-checkers in the country, region, EU and globally, and continued participation in the Code of Practice Taskforce.

Commitment 30

Relevant Signatories commit to establish a framework for transparent, structured, open, financially sustainable, and non-discriminatory cooperation between them and the EU fact-checking community regarding resources and support made available to fact-checkers. [change wording if adapted]

Measure 30.1	[insert wording if adapted]
QRE 30.1.1 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters]
QRE 30.1.2 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters]
QRE 30.1.3 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters]
SLI 30.1.1 – Member States and languages covered by agreements with the fact-checking organisations [change wording if adapted]	Methodology of data measurement [suggested character limit: 500 characters]
	In 2024 Faktograf continued to participate in Meta's Third Party Fact-Checking programme (Croatia, Croatian language) and started to participate in TikTok's Global Fact-checking Program.
Data	
	1
Measure 30.2	[insert wording if adapted]
QRE 30.2.1 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters]
QRE 30.2.2 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters]
QRE 30.2.3 [insert wording if adapted]	
Measure 30.3	[insert wording if adapted]
QRE 30.3.1 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters] Faktograf cooperates with fact-checking colleagues in the EFCSN, the IFCN and the SEE Check network.
Measure 30.4	[insert wording if adapted]
QRE 30.4.1 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters] In 2024 Faktograf was a verified member of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network and Faktograf's representative served as a member of the EFCSN's Board.

Commitment 31

Relevant Signatories commit to integrate, showcase, or otherwise consistently use fact-checkers' work in their platforms' services, processes, and contents; with full coverage of all Member States and languages. [change wording if adapted]				
Measure 31.1	[insert wording if adapted]			
Measure 31.2	[insert wording if adapted]			
QRE 31.1.1 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters]			
SLI 31.1.1 – use of fact-checks [change wording if adapted]	Methodology of data measurement [suggested character limit: 500 characters]			
	Nr of fact-checked articles published	Reach of fact-checked	Nr of content pieces reviewed by fact-checkers	Other
Data				
SLI 31.1.2 – impact of actions taken [change wording if adapted]	Methodology of data measurement [suggested character limit: 500 characters]			
	Nr of pieces of content labelled	Impact of said measures on user interactions with information labelled as false or misleading	Other	
Data				
SLI 31.1.3 – Quantitative information used for contextualisation for the SLIs 31.1.1 / 31.1.2 [change wording if adapted]	Methodology of data measurement [suggested character limit: 500 characters]			
	Denominator to be decided within the TF ahead of the baseline report			
Data				
Measure 31.3	[insert wording if adapted]			
QRE 31.3.1 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters] In 2024 Faktograf participated in multiple discussions on the repository within the EFCSN and the Task Force's subgroup on fact-checking, exploring various ways in which the repository could be useful for a wide set of users, including researchers and universities.			
Measure 31.4	[insert wording if adapted]			
QRE 31.4.1 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters] In 2024 Faktograf raised the questions on the need to address this measure (solutions to facilitate the efficient use of a common repository across platforms) within the Task Force.			

VII. Empowering the fact-checking community
Commitment 32

Relevant Signatories commit to provide fact-checkers with prompt, and whenever possible automated, access to information that is pertinent to help them to maximise the quality and impact of fact-checking, as defined in a framework to be designed in coordination with EDMO and an elected body representative of the independent European fact-checking organisations. [change wording if adapted]			
Measure 32.1	[insert wording if adapted]		
Measure 32.2	[insert wording if adapted]		
QRE 32.1.1 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters]		
SLI 32.1.1 – use of the interfaces and other tools [change wording if adapted]	Methodology of data measurement [suggested character limit: 500 characters]		
	Monthly users	Other	Other
Data			
Measure 32.3	[insert wording if adapted]		
QRE 32.3.1 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters] Faktograf can confirm regular exchange of information with dedicated staff in Meta, within the Third Party Fact-Checking program. During 2024, Faktograf also engaged in regular exchange of information with TikTok.		

VII. Empowering the fact-checking community
Commitment 33
Relevant Signatories (i.e. fact-checking organisations) commit to operate on the basis of strict ethical and transparency rules, and to protect their independence. [change wording if adapted]

Measure 33.1	[insert wording if adapted]
QRE 33.1.1 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters] Faktograf – the Association for the Informed Public was deemed compliant with the EFCSN Code of Principles when subjected to the established vetting process and evaluated by external assessors during 2023. Faktograf's editorial line and its standards are protected by the Statute of the Association, the Statute of the Newsroom and its Ethics Code. Full information on Faktograf.hr's methodology is available on site, as well as information on transparency of funding. During 2024 Faktograf – Association for an Informed Public became the first media publisher in Croatia to be awarded the Journalism Trust Initiative certificate. After several months of detailed auditing by ABC, Faktograf demonstrated that its internal processes and controls are fully aligned with the JTI standard, with no recommendations for improvement in any area.

SLI 33.1.1 – number of European fact-checkers that are IFCN-certified [change wording if adapted]	Methodology of data measurement [suggested character limit: 500 characters] The EFCSN has taken into account fact-checking organisations based in EU Member or Council of Europe states, plus Belarus and Kosovo.	
	Nr of fact-checkers IFCN-certified	Nr of members of members of EFCSN
Data	68 signatories 10 organisations under renewal 9 organisations with certification expired	60 verified members 4 under review

VIII. Transparency Centre
Commitment 34
To ensure transparency and accountability around the implementation of this Code, Relevant Signatories commit to set up and maintain a publicly available common Transparency Centre website. [change wording if adapted]

Measure 34.3	[insert wording if adapted] During 2024 Faktograf provided two reports to the Transparency Centre: annual report for 2023 and the report on the first half of 2024 including the period of European elections.

VIII. Transparency Centre
Commitment 35
Signatories commit to ensure that the Transparency Centre contains all the relevant information related to the implementation of the Code's Commitments and Measures and that this information is presented in an easy-to-understand manner, per service, and is easily searchable. [change wording if adapted]

Measure 35.4	[insert wording if adapted] Faktograf participated in the discussions on the public communication regarding Structural Indicators and Elections in Europe as published on the Transparency Centre website https://disinfocode.eu/

VIII. Transparency Centre
Commitment 36

	Signatories commit to updating the relevant information contained in the Transparency Centre in a timely and complete manner. [change wording if adapted]
QRE 36.1.1 (for the Commitments 34–36) [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters] Faktograf did not participate in the Taskforce subgroup in charge of the Transparency Center, but has been following the development and correct functioning of the tool. The Transparency Centre website had, for the reporting period in question: - 20255 page views - 5626 report downloads in total. The average engagement time per session was 4 minutes and 5 seconds (4m5s).

IX. Permanent Task-Force
Commitment 37
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]

QRE 37.6.1 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters] Faktograf participated in the Task Force's online plenary meeting and online meetings of four subgroups: Monitoring and Reporting, Crisis Response, Empowerment of Fact-checkers and Generative AI, as well as the Elections Working Group.

X. Monitoring of Code
Commitment 38
The Signatories commit to dedicate adequate financial and human resources and put in place appropriate internal processes to ensure the implementation of their commitments under the Code. [change wording if adapted]

QRE 38.1.1 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters] Faktograf dedicated one representative to participate in the work of this Task Force who is also a member of the EFCSN Policy Task Force.

X. Monitoring of Code	
Commitment 40 Signatories commit to provide regular reporting on Service Level Indicators (SLIs) and Qualitative Reporting Elements (QREs). The reports and data provided should allow for a thorough assessment of the extent of the implementation of the Code's Commitments and Measures by each Signatory, service and at Member State level. [change wording if adapted]	
Measure 40.2	[insert wording if adapted] During 2024 Faktograf provided two reports to the Transparency Centre: annual report for 2023 and the report on the first half of 2024 including the period of European elections.
Measure 40.3	[insert wording if adapted]
Measure 40.4	[insert wording if adapted]
Measure 40.5	[insert wording if adapted]

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 and the Israel–Hamas Conflict
Threats observed or anticipated at time of reporting: [suggested character limit 2000 characters]. The exposure of online audiences to misinformation on both war of aggression by Russia on Ukraine and Israel–Hamas Conflict could lead to information disorder in relation to general audiences (lack of timely, correct and full information) as well as specific vulnerable groups (minorities, refugees), with a risk of hampering humanitarian aid and peaceful solution to the crises.
Mitigations in place at time of reporting: [suggested character limit: 2000 characters]. Faktograf continues to publish fact-checked articles on disinformation about the situation in Israel and Palestine, as well as assessments of the accuracy of statements by officials and other prominent figures in society, and analyses providing a broader picture under Live Blog: War in the Middle East. Faktograf continues to publish fact-checked articles on disinformation about the situation in Ukraine, as well as assessments of the accuracy of statements by officials and other prominent figures in society, and analyses providing a broader picture under Live Blog: The War in Ukraine.

Reporting on the service's response during an election

Reporting on the signatory's response during an election

2024 European and Croatian Parliament Elections

<u>Threats observed during the electoral period: [suggested character limit 2000 characters].</u>

The campaign for the European Elections was organised in Croatia in part simultaneously with the campaign for the Croatian Parliament elections, so the context, actors and channels of communications were saturated with political pre-election content.

During both election campaigns citizens in Croatia lacked trustworthy information (including on the <u>decision of the Constitutional Court to forbid a political party to publicly mention who is their candidate for the Prime Minister</u>) and were exposed to misinformation and disinformation.

Having in mind that election periods are a factor that influences the frequency of harassment against fact-checkers, Faktograf also expected the growth of coordinated online harassment campaigns against journalists and fact-checkers. According to <u>Mapping Media Freedom</u> in Croatia in 2024 there have been 17 cases of various attacks against journalists, including three incidents against members of Faktograf. One of those was committed by a successful candidate and <u>now a member of the European Parliament</u>.

<u>Mitigations in place during the electoral period: [suggested character limit: 2000 characters].</u>

In spring 2024 Faktograf focused its activities on providing trustworthy information and debunking misinformation and disinformation to citizens in Croatia. Additionally, Faktograf engaged in promoting digital media literacy and protecting its journalists from harassment, while also cooperating with fact-checkers in the country, region, EU and globally.

1. providing trustworthy information

To professionally cover both election campaigns - for the European and for the Croatian Parliament, Faktograf aggregated all its reporting in the <u>live blog</u>. It included <u>fact-checking the candidates' claims from the public debates</u>, <u>exclusive publishing of unavailable minority opinions in the Constitutional Court</u>, analysis of <u>the Constitutional Court ban</u>, reporting on the <u>claims that political ads on Google were paid for by Polish actors</u>,... Also, Faktograf started publishing a new media outlet focused on climate issues <u>Klimatski.hr</u> and <u>co-organised a debate</u> with candidates for the EP focused on the climate crisis.

2. debunking misinformation

Having in mind that <u>Facebook exempts politicians from their third-party fact-checking program</u>, Faktograf provided Meta the service of fact-checking in Croatia. Faktograf debunked a series of deepfake scams on Facebook such as <u>a fake video of the editor of RTL and the Croatian president</u>, <u>a fake video of a "famous cardiologist" connected to the ruling party giving an interview to a TV host</u> and fake videos <u>of the Prime Minister promoting investment in a gas company</u> and of the <u>President promoting investment in an oil company</u>.

Faktograf was also approached by TikTok and started providing fact-checking services in the period before the elections.

3. promoting digital media literacy

Faktograf called its audiences to send in questions that interest them and asks for accuracy checks on topics relevant for the European Parliament elections (<u>One hundred days until the elections for the European Parliament - send us your questions!</u>).

Regarding the expected spread of deep fakes, Faktograf engaged in prebunking efforts such as <u>Elections are approaching, and AI disinformation is becoming more and more convincing</u> and <u>The most common topics of disinformation before the EU elections were the war in Ukraine, followed by the climate, EU policies and migration</u>.

Faktograf also had a series of videos on its TikTok account.

4. anti-harrasment activities

While investigating a question from the audience on the lacking transparency of private property of a candidate for European Parliament, Faktograf's journalist Andrej Dimitrijević was verbally attacked by the candidate who also used his profiles on Facebook and Twitter to start a hateful campaign against the journalist. The Croatian Journalists Association condemned the lynching, other media outlets continued with reporting on the politician's assets and his party president insisted on full disclosure that was later given to the public.

This incident, as well as two other incidents against Faktograf's journalist Melita Vrsaljko, were reported to the Mapping Media Freedom database, caused international reactions and contributed to deployment of an international mission to assess media freedom challenges in Croatia.

In order to protect its own fact-checking operation from risks of various threats stemming from a super election year in Croatia (such as a DDoS attack or a SLAPP), Faktograf enhanced digital and offline security and safety of its members and resources. Additionally, Faktograf has engaged in the continuation of the project Decoding the Disinformation Playbook 2 with focus on disinformation tactics used by populists to intimidate and discredit journalists covering the elections to the European Parliament in 2024.

These issues were further discussed in public events, such as the 11th GlobalFact summit in July in Sarajevo, organised by the International Fact-checking Network and hosted by the SEE Check network, as well as World Congress and Media Innovation Festival in May in Sarajevo, organised by the International Press Institute.

5. collaboration with the EFCSN:

Faktograf collaborated with other fact-checkers and participated in projects organised by the EFCSN:

Elections24Check enabled building of a public database of political fact-checks, disinformation debunks, prebunking articles and narrative reports on transnational trends – in total more than 3,000 fact-checks from 46 EFCSN organisations across 36 countries and 34 languages.

AI@EUElections delivered surveys, training sessions and educational materials on best practices, new techniques and essential tools for identifying AI generated and digitally altered content. Faktograf participated in the project and the public communications campaign to raise awareness of the dangers AI generated mis- and disinformation might pose and to educate the public in Croatia on how to identify and debunk AI-generated disinformation.

FactCRICIS – European Fact-Checking Response in Climate Crises was a cross-country collaboration in detecting and debunking climate disinformation across the EU, that has been identified by members as a likely key topic for the elections.

6. participation in the Code of Practice Taskforce:

Having in mind the Commission Guidelines on the mitigation of systemic risks for electoral processes and the Rapid Response Mechanism of the Taskforce, Faktograf actively participated in the sub-groups established within the Code: Empowerment of fact-checkers, Monitoring & Reporting, Generative AI, and Crisis Response.

Although Faktograf was not approached by any platform to provide expertise relevant for risk analysis, mitigation and rapid response mechanisms in Croatia, we remain open to dialogue and engaging with all stakeholders.

Reporting on the signatory's response during an election
2024 Croatian Presidential Elections

Threats observed during the electoral period: [suggested character limit 2000 characters].

The campaign for the Presidential Elections in Croatia intensified in early September and was at its peak in December as the first round was held on December 29, 2024, and the second round on January 12, 2025.

Although Faktograf was not approached by any platform to provide expertise relevant for risk analysis, mitigation and rapid response mechanisms in Croatia, we remain open to dialogue and engaging with all stakeholders.

Mitigations in place during the electoral period: [suggested character limit: 2000 characters].

During the preelection period, the election campaign and in its aftermath, Faktograf engaged in a set of activities;

1. providing trustworthy information to the citizens

Faktograf aggregated all its reporting and fact-checking under a dedicated tag, analysed the candidates' programmes, conducted live-fact-checking of more than 50 claims by the candidates during tv debates in the first round and in the final round, analysed new trends in online campaigns, provided the most comprehensive analysis of the controversial report from the Centre for Information Resilience and prepared the final overview of disinformation narratives present during the campaign.

Besides publishing on the website, information was distributed via the WhatsApp channel and accounts on online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Threads and TikTok.

2. promoting digital media literacy

Regarding the expected spread of deep fakes, Faktograf provided prebunking such as Elections are approaching, and AI disinformation is becoming more and more convincing.

3. cooperating with online platforms

Faktograf cooperated with TikTok's Global Fact-checking Program and Meta's third-party fact-checking program (exempting politicians).

4. cooperation within the Code of Practice Taskforce:

Having in mind the Commission Guidelines on the mitigation of systemic risks for electoral processes and the Rapid Response Mechanism of the Taskforce, Faktograf participated in the ad hoc working group on Croatian Presidential Elections working under a RRS-light mechanism. Faktograf shared two situational awareness reports announcing the campaign and own activities and informing on the results of fact-checking the controversial report from the Centre for Information Resilience on the eve of the election silence.

5. cooperation on the national level

Faktograf participated in The Roundtable on Electoral Integrity organised by The Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries (HAKOM) that was designated as the Coordinator for Digital Services in the Republic of Croatia.

As part of the Election Facts Database project, Faktograf cooperated with online media Lupa and Libela in sharing content in order to mitigate harmful effects of misinformation on democratic processes and the integrity of elections.