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From: Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director

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To: Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

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Delegations will find attached document COM(2023) 630 final - ANNEX.

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ANNEX

ANNEX

to the

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

on Defence of Democracy

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY ACTION PLAN (EDAP)

EDAP area	Objectives and Actions	State of play/ Deliverables
<p><i>Protecting election integrity and promoting democratic participation</i></p>	<p><i>Propose legislation to ensure greater transparency in the area of sponsored content in a political context ('political advertising')</i></p>	<p>A proposal for a Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising was adopted on 25 November 2021. Interinstitutional negotiations were concluded on 6 November 2023, with a formal adoption by co-legislators of the agreed position expected for early 2024.</p> <p>The agreed compromise text provides for a common high standard of transparency for political advertising services for all media forms, enabling citizens, civil society and responsible authorities to clearly identify the source and purpose of such advertising, thereby allowing for better public scrutiny and accountability. The measures proposed also strengthen the protection of personal data, introducing stricter conditions and more transparency around the targeting and delivery of political advertising. Under the provisional agreement, the use of personal data for targeting political ads online will only be allowed if the data was collected from the data subject and if explicit consent was given; this is coupled with a ban on the use of special categories of personal data for purposes of targeting (such as religion, ethnic origin or sexual orientation). The new rules will apply to political advertising normally provided for remuneration as well as political advertising prepared in-house or as part of a political advertising campaign, with particular attention to safeguard content under editorial responsibility or the expression of personal views, which are excluded from scope. In addition, the political agreement also foresees the Commission setting up a European public repository for online political advertisements. To address the risk of foreign interference, the regulation further prohibits sponsoring ads outside the EU three months before elections. The role of European political parties and political groups in the European election process is also recognised through a specific non-discrimination clause.</p> <p>The new rules will apply 18 months after the entry into force, with the non-discrimination clause and the definitions being applicable immediately, in time for the European elections.</p> <p><u><i>Useful links:</i></u></p> <p>Legislative proposal for regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising Technology and Democracy: Understanding the influence of online technologies on political behaviour and decision-making</p>
	<p><i>Adopt support measures and guidance for political parties and Member States on transparency of sponsored political content</i></p>	<p>The Commission has continued to facilitate in the European Cooperation Network on Elections exchanges of best practices on the issues of transparency of political advertising, including support and guidance for political parties and Member States.</p>

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	<p><i>Revision of Regulation No 1141/2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations</i></p>	<p>A proposal for a revision of the rules on the statute and funding of European political parties and foundations was adopted on 25 November 2021. The proposed regulation will give political parties and foundations more possibilities to fulfil their role in building and nourishing a truly European political sphere, while at the same time making sure that their action is free from undue interference. This would help European political parties interact with their national member parties and across borders; increase transparency, in particular in relation to political advertisement and donations; cut excessive administrative burden; and increase their financial viability.</p> <p>Interinstitutional negotiations are ongoing.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Statute and funding of European political parties and foundations</p>
	<p><i>Set up a new joint operational mechanism and other support measures, building on the work of the European Cooperation Network on Elections, to promote resilient electoral processes and take further practical measures to protect election infrastructure against threats, including against cyber-attacks</i></p>	<p>In January 2022 the Commission started rolling out a ‘joint mechanism for electoral resilience’, which supports the deployment of joint expert teams and expert exchanges between Member States. This capacity-building tool aims at supporting the resilience of electoral processes to various types of threats, in particular in the area of online forensics, disinformation and cybersecurity of elections. To-date, Romania, Lithuania and Sweden made use of this mechanism.</p> <p>With the support of the mechanism, the Commission, together with ENISA and the European Parliament organised on 21 November 2023 a table-top exercise to support cybersecurity of election processes, building on the lessons learned from the 2019 edition.</p> <p>The mechanism has also been used to support the work of the Commission and Member States for the preparation of the compendium on e-voting and the guide of good electoral practice addressing participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral process.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>European cooperation network on elections Towards cybersecure EU elections 2019 EU cybersecurity exercise: free and fair EU elections (europa.eu)</p>
	<p><i>The Commission will organise a high-level event bringing together various authorities related to elections to address</i></p>	<p>The high-level event on elections took place in Brussels on 23 and 24 October 2023. The event, organised by the European Commission, brought together various national authorities and stakeholders and focused on democratic participation and integrity of elections. The event offered the possibility to national policymakers and practitioners to engage in discussions and exchanges of best practices to support turnout, empower citizens to take part in the elections in an inclusive manner, as</p>

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	<i>the challenges outlined in this plan</i>	well as other measures ensuring the resilience of the electoral systems and the fairness and transparency of the elections across the Union.
	Strengthen cooperation on parity of treatment and balanced media coverage during elections	<p>To strengthen cooperation between the competent authorities responsible for media policy and those with competence on electoral matters, a joint meeting was organised in May 2022 bringing together the European Regulators Group for Audio-visual Media Services (ERGA), the Rapid Alert System and the European Cooperation Network on Elections to discuss parity of treatment and media coverage during elections.</p> <p>A follow-up meeting of the same actors took place in March 2023 to discuss in particular best ways to address disinformation, including follow-up to the strengthened Code of Practice on Disinformation, in the context of the preparation of the 2024 European Parliament elections</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Joint meeting – Summary of the Meeting of May 2022 Joint meeting – Summary of the Meeting of March 2023</p>
	Prepare a compendium of e-voting practices	<p>The Commission published a compendium of e-voting and other ICT practices. It was prepared together with Member States in the framework of the European Cooperation Network on Elections (ECNE), building on the expertise of the Council of Europe.</p> <p>The compendium is informed by the contributions of members of an informal expert subgroup of ECNE on e-voting and a short study on e-voting and ICT practices used in electoral processes prepared by a Network of Academics on citizenship.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Democracy and electoral rights – Commission activities Compendium of e-voting and other ICT practices Study on E-Voting practices in the EU</p>
Facilitate cooperation between EU networks and partner countries and international organisations to build capacity and exchange best practices in countering electoral threats and promote high	<p>The Commission and EEAS have reinforced efforts to facilitate cooperation between the EU, international organisations and partner countries to build capacity and exchange best practices in countering electoral threats and safeguarding democratic processes.</p> <p>The global Team Europe Initiative on Democracy (TED) was launched in December 2021. This innovative coordination mechanism between the EU and 14 Member States contributes to policy coherence in this area. It sets common objectives in line with the priorities set in the Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024, in three key areas: ‘accountability</p>	

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	<p><i>international standards in the use of new technologies</i></p>	<p>and Rule of Law’; ‘Political and Civic Participation’; ‘Media and Digital’. It will also include a Democracy Network, open to civil society and specialised international actors, launched in June 2023.</p> <p>A number of development cooperation programmes, in the field of Democracy Support, were designed and launched to this end. Examples include the EUR 42 million programme WYDE (Women and Youth in Democracy Initiative). The first component, WYDE Civic engagement, implemented by the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), started in 2022. It also helps EU Delegation implement their Human Right and Democracy Country strategy by funding youth grass roots organisations involved in democratic reforms advocacy, accountability activities and domestic election observation. The WYDE inter pares helps increase inter-parliamentary cooperation with a specific focus on youth and women inclusion in political life.</p> <p>On 28 March 2023, in a side event to the Summit, Denmark and the European Commission also launched the Digital Democracy Initiative (DDI), a multi-donor programme to amplify local civil society to protect and promote inclusive democracy in the digital age, with a focus on equal access to digital technologies, youth inclusion, climate justice and managing risks related to AI (EU contribution EUR 11M). The EU also supports the implementation of UNESCO’s Recommendations on the Ethics of AI as well as UNESCO’s Guidelines for Digital Platform Governance. The goal of these two actions is to safeguard human rights in the context of the development of AI and the development of digital platform regulatory processes across the world.</p> <p>In the EU enlargement context, the Commission has been funding support actions by the ODIHR aimed at following up to electoral recommendations and supporting electoral reform in the Western Balkans since 2017. The current phase (budget of EUR 1.7 million) will run until mid-2024. Several additional initiatives are funded at bilateral level in support of civil society participation in electoral processes and democratic debate.</p> <p>The EU participation in the first (2021) and the second (2023) Summit for Democracy provided the occasion to reinforce alliances for democracy and to display the work done by the EU in the field of global democracy support. The EU participated in the ‘Year of action’ preceding the second Summit through engagement in the multi-stakeholder coalitions, the so-called ‘Democracy cohorts’ with a focus on ‘Youth Political and Civic Engagement’ and on ‘Deliberative democracy’.</p> <p><u><i>Useful links:</i></u></p> <p>Team Europe Democracy (TED) Team Europe Initiative and Joint Programming tracker (europa.eu) Promoting inclusive democracy in the digital age: EU and Denmark launch the Digital Democracy Initiative (europa.eu) Summit for Democracy: EU launches milestone programmes to empower youth as key actors of democracy (europa.eu) Summary for Democracy: March 2023 Summit Support to Electoral Reforms in the Western Balkans OSCE The Youth Democracy Cohort</p>

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	<p><i>Consolidate the capacity of EU election observation missions in third countries to observe and assess online election campaigns and to follow-up on their recommendations</i></p>	<p>The EU deployed 35 Election Observation Missions (EOM), Expert Missions (EEM) and Follow-up Missions (EFM) in 2021 and 2022. A solid methodology and accompanying tools for observing social media are now consistently used in every EU Election Observation Mission, whose recommendations have been expanded to include this field. Social media observation is now integrated by default into the Core Team of experts for every EOM.</p> <p>As part of the ongoing work with the organisations having endorsed the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DoP) a working group focused on the impact of data protection over electoral integrity is led by the European External Action Service. The aim is to outline what are the guiding principles and the good practices that should be followed to guarantee that data is protected in an electoral process, thus enhancing the integrity of the election and safeguarding voters' right to privacy and also to access to public documents.</p> <p>Prior to this, common guidelines (non-binding) on observation of the online campaign and fundamental principles for Electoral ICT were adopted at the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation plenary meeting co-hosted by the EEAS, European Parliament in Brussels in December 2022 and are now being put to use.</p> <p><u>Useful links:</u></p> <p>EU Election Observation Missions Declaration of Principles for International Election Observations Guidelines for Observation of Election Campaigns on Social Networks</p>
	<p><i>Encourage the use of EU structural funds to fund civil society and build capacity and institutional/administrative infrastructure for deliberative civic engagement and political participation</i></p>	<p>The Commission coordinated a series of events and projects to raise awareness and build capacity for citizen engagement in the design and implementation of cohesion policy and in a wider and strategic EU policy context.</p> <p>The Partnership Principle lies at the heart of the EU's cohesion policy. Giving stakeholders – and via them also citizens – a voice in decisions that concern them directly plays an important role in enforcing the legitimacy of EU policymaking and the democratic accountability of investments by the EU and by the national authorities. The Code of Conduct on Partnership ensures that the regional, local and urban authorities, as well as civil society, environmental and social partners, non-governmental organisations are involved in the design and implementation of the investment projects on the ground.</p> <p>In 2022 the Commission launched the European Community of Practice on Partnership (ECOPP) which gathers 159 representatives from civil society, public authorities, regional and local level stakeholders to promote partnership in the implementation of the EU funds. The network has delivered concrete guidelines on the policy frame for partnership as well</p>

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		<p>as tools for strengthening the partnership across the EU. On top, the cohesion policy plans to invest EUR 26,9 billion under the policy objective Europe Closer to Citizens by empowering local authorities to deliver integrated place-based investments all over Europe, with close engagement of local people and other stakeholders.</p> <p>In July 2020, the Commission and the OECD started cooperation to offer technical support to public authorities and civil society organisations that want to implement deliberative processes (e.g. citizens jury, voting, budgeting) in the context of design, implementation and monitoring of investments funded by ERDF, JTF and Cohesion Fund. Following the first phase, with publication of final report on "Engaging citizens in cohesion policy", phase 2 started in July 2022. Today, eight deliberative processes are on-going or in preparation in Belgium, Italy, Poland, Romania and Spain.</p> <p>Another example includes a pilot project run in 2022 on citizens engagement on green infrastructure in urban areas, in 10 European cities. The publication of this work can be found in the form of an Atlas available online, and offers amongst others rationale and guidance to conduct citizen engagement at city level.</p> <p>The Commission is developing a training package on co-creation and deliberative practices targeted to public administrations at all levels of governance. This package includes a training of trainers' course. The full package is expected to be released through the EU Academy in the first trimester of 2024.</p> <p>The Commission is also developing a study on the role of public spaces to enable democratic practices. This is part of a wider vision that considers the need for redefinition of democracy infrastructures. The science for policy report based on the input of worldwide experts is planned to be released early Autumn 2024.</p> <p>In September 2021, the Commission launched a Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy to build capacity and best practice in participatory and deliberative citizen engagement practices, targeted at all levels of governance. The Competence Centre works to support the Commission services and Member States, sbased on the most up to date material on participatory and deliberative democracy.</p> <p>Externally, Global Europe Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe) (NDICI) Civil Society Programme (EUR 1,5B) promotes civil society as actors of governance, whilst the Human Rights and Democracy Programme (EUR 1,5B) includes targeted actions to protect and build capacity of human rights and democracy civil society and human rights defenders. For instance, the EU supports the (EUR 30M) <i>Protect.Defenders.eu</i> programme, providing lifeline support to human rights defenders in the world. The EU has also funded a system for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society EU SEE (EUR 50m), which will monitor the enabling environment for civil society, and provide early warning in times of change, as well as long term capacity building and flexible financial support.</p> <p>The EU Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) Programme (EUR 186 M) works with European civil society organisations and local authorities (LAs) to empower EU citizens to address global challenges and crises; promote</p>

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		<p>European values, justice, human rights and democracy, co-responsibility, equity, and sustainable development at local and global level.</p> <p>The Commission also provides substantive financial support to Civil Society in the Western Balkans and Türkiye. Under IPA II (2014-2020) the EU provided around EUR 333 million to civil society and the media across the region through the Civil Society Facility and Media Programme. EUR 218.5 million are already being allocated for the period 2021-2023 with similar amounts earmarked for 2024-2027.</p> <p>Support is provided via multiple channels and modalities, including grants to CSOs on variety of topics and technical assistance to build their capacities.. Among others, to the European Endowment for Democracy implements a flexible re-granting scheme for pro-democracy support in fast changing environments (e.g. start-up funding, core and bridge funding, support to small-scale initiatives).. Further support is channeled under the EU Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Engaging citizens in cohesion policy: pilot project final report en OECD Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy Summit for Democracy: EU launches milestone programmes to empower youth as key actors of democracy (europa.eu) European Endowment for Democracy - home (democracyendowment.eu) DEAR: Development Education and Awareness Raising Programme (europa.eu) The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights - EIDHR</p>
	<p><i>Use EU funds and opportunities under the EU youth strategy, citizenship education, the Creative Europe Programme and the equality agenda to foster access to democratic participation and trust in democracy</i></p>	<p>The Conference on the Future of Europe acted as an important catalyst for new forms of citizens’ participation and deliberative processes. It has led to a new phase of citizens engagement with a new generation of European Citizen’s Panels embedded in the European Commission’s policy making process. In support, a new guidebook defining principles and formats of citizens’ participation and deliberative processes is under preparation. This is complemented by a new online one-stop-shop on citizens engagement, bundling together existing tools, notably the public consultation portal, the European Citizens’ Initiative and a new interactive space inspired by the Conference on the Future of Europe platform.</p> <p>In addition, a wide range of funding opportunities is available to foster access to democratic participation, civic engagement, trust in democracy and research into related questions, most notably in the context of the Creative Europe programme, Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe. This is fully aligned with the relevant EU’s policy agenda, in particular in the area of culture and media, youth, education and research.</p> <p>In the field of culture, the Commission published a report on Culture and Democracy – the evidence. How citizens’ participation in cultural activities enhances civic engagement, democracy and social cohesion in June 2023. The EU Work Plan for Culture (2023-2026) maintains the focus on enhancing cultural participation and the role of culture in society</p>

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		<p>(defined as one of 4 priorities, notably “Culture and promoting democracy: toward cultural citizenship in Europe), with targeted activities on strengthening democracy and civic engagement through cultural participation. In this context, the Commission will collect concrete examples, to be shared with Member States and stakeholders, on how to build effective synergies between schools and cultural agents designed to enhance pupils’ civic engagement, democratic attitudes and resilience through a 2-year “Culture and Democracy Study and Peer-Learning” project..</p> <p>Under Creative Europe, a number of calls fund projects specifically addressing different aspects of democratic participation, including projects on the future of democracy, the impact of inequalities, the role of culture for democracy-building, inclusion and inter-cultural dialogue. Across 2023 and 2024, a EUR 10 million action has been set up to support primarily local, regional, or investigative media and other media relevant for democracy. Continued financial support is also provided to journalism partnerships to support the resilience of media, and therefore a plurality of offers on the market.</p> <p>The Commission also supports mutual learning, including on issues related to the citizenship education, EU values and European dimension of teaching, within the Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training, gathering education experts appointed by Member States and other participating countries, stakeholder organisations and social partners. In 2023 the Working Group published an Issue paper on citizenship education.</p> <p>The Commission has undertaken a variety of activities specifically to support youth participation, including through the organisation of the European Year of Youth (2022), the EU Youth Dialogue and the Young European Ambassadors programme. Erasmus+ (2021-2027) promotes participation and civic engagement in Europe’s democratic life through multiple funding streams, including actions specifically dedicated to young people, also internationally (supporting for instance youth organisations in the Western Balkans or South Mediterranean).</p> <p>Grants are also available under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme CERV, specifically the Call for proposals on Citizens’ engagement and participation, launched end 2022, with a focus on the 2024 European Parliament elections and efforts needed to promote the participation of citizens in the elections, and to promote EU citizenship engagement.</p> <p>Under Horizon Europe, a number of calls fund research specifically addressing different aspects of democratic participation, including projects on the future of democracy, the impact of inequalities, the role of education, the impact of online social networks and new media, among others. The 2023-2024 work programme foresees two yearly calls for proposals on democracy and governance (total envelope of EUR 170 million), on top of the EUR 125 million under the 2021-22 programme in support of 47 ongoing research projects.</p> <p>Under the Technical Support Instrument, Member States can receive support upon request to address several issues linked to education, equality, social protection, democracy, rule of law or the quality of public administration.</p>

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		<p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Communication “Conference on the Future of Europe, Putting vision into concrete action”</p> <p>Overview of EU programmes and funds financed from the EU budget and NextGenerationEU</p> <p>Culture and democracy, the evidence. How citizens’ participation in cultural activities enhances civic engagement, democracy and social cohesion : lessons from international research</p> <p>Erasmus+ project results platform</p> <p>EU-supported European Media Platforms</p> <p>Horizon Europe: Work Programmes and Research and innovation funding for democracy and governance (europa.eu)</p> <p>Technical Support Instrument (TSI) (europa.eu)</p>
	<p><i>Fight against hate speech and promote respect in the public debate through the extension the list of EU crimes to hate crime and hate speech</i></p>	<p>In 2021, the Commission adopted a Communication on a more inclusive and protective Europe extending the list of EU crimes to hate speech and hate crime, also in view of fostering a respectful, enabling and safer environment for public debate. This paves the way for a future Council decision to extend the list of EU crimes under Article 83(1) of the Treaty to cover hate crime and hate speech, including online hate speech.</p> <p>Discussions at Council on the decision to extend the list of EU crimes to hate speech and hate crime are still underway.</p> <p>Under IPA II, the Commission funds the programme “Reporting Diversity Network 2.0.” (EUR 1 million; Aug 2020 – Aug 2024) which empowers a regional network of CSOs to work together with the aim to influence the quality of media messages affecting perceptions of ethnicity, religion and gender as pressing thematic areas relevant for overall levels of understanding and tolerance in the Western Balkans. The project provides tools, resources and evidence for the entire civil society to promote more inclusive media, and effective policy-making advancing tolerance.</p> <p>Under IPA II and III, the Commission supports the work of the Council of Europe in fighting against discrimination and hate speech in the Western Balkans, through a dedicated component of the EU-Council of Europe Horizontal Facility (EUR 12 million). Thorough regional and country-specific technical assistance, it supports the alignment with European standards and the Commission’s country report recommendations in the area of fundamental rights.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Communication on a more inclusive and protective Europe</p> <p>Reporting Diversity Network - Reporting Diversity Network</p>
<p><i>Strengthening media freedom and media pluralism</i></p>	<p><i>Recommendation on ensuring the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals</i></p>	<p>The 2021 Recommendation on the safety of journalists, adopted in September 2021, put forward actions for Member States to improve the safety of journalists. It provides a catalogue of practical measures relating to the effective and impartial investigation and prosecution of crimes, independent response and support mechanisms, access to venues and information, safety during demonstrations, training and online safety and digital empowerment. Intensified measures were recommended</p>

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	<p><i>in the European Union, taking into account new online threats faced in particular by women journalists</i></p>	<p>to protect those particularly vulnerable to threats and attack, including female journalists, journalists belonging to minority groups, and journalists reporting on equality issues. In July 2023 the Commission launched an independent external study to collect information on Member States' activities to implement the recommendation. The study will produce country factsheets and assess countries' practices and will develop key indicators and a monitoring and evaluation methodology. This methodology will be used in future reporting exercises and is expected to enhance completeness and consistency of reporting under the Recommendation. The preliminary findings of the study are discussed at the fourth edition of the News Media Forum held on 4 December 2023 in Brussels. The Commission also continues to fund actions focusing on providing legal and practical assistance to journalists in the EU and beyond.</p> <p>Under IPA III, the Commission funds the programme “SafeJournalists Network” (EUR 1.44 million; April 2023 - Jul 2026), implemented by a consortium led by Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia, to contribute to creating an enabling environment via support to a regional early warning platform reporting cases of attacks and threats against journalists, and further engagement with law enforcement and the judicial authorities, as well as to properly and swiftly follow up on such cases.</p> <p>Under the Horizontal Facility with the Council of Europe both regional and country specific allocations in the Western Balkans support the application of media actors' rights and responsibilities in line with European standards, and the improvement of the legal framework (EUR 4 million Jan 2023-Dec 2026).</p> <p><u>Useful links:</u></p> <p>Commission Recommendation on ensuring the protection, safety and empowering of journalists and other media professionals in the European Union Home - SafeJournalists Promoting and protecting freedom of expression and media - Horizontal Facility (coe.int)</p>
	<p><i>Structured dialogue, under the European News Media Forum, with Member States, stakeholders and international organisations to prepare and implement the recommendation</i></p>	<p>A structured dialogue on the safety of journalists in view of preparing the Recommendation took place at the first edition of the European News Media Forum (23-25 March 2021). Relevant stakeholder representatives attended the Forum, including international, national and EU institutions, journalists and publishers associations, researchers, NGOs, online platforms. After having discussed media transformation and innovation in its 2nd and 3rd editions, a new edition of the forum was held on 4 December 2023 in Brussels to discuss the preliminary findings of the independent external study on Member States' activities to implement the recommendation..</p> <p><u>Useful links:</u></p> <p>Event report on the structured dialogue on the safety of journalists European News Media Forum on Safety of Journalists</p>

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	<p><i>Sustainable funding for projects with a focus on legal and practical assistance to journalists in the EU and elsewhere, including safety and cybersecurity training for journalists and diplomatic support</i></p>	<p>The Commission funds projects on legal and practical assistance to journalists, both in Member States and globally. Actions focus on emergency support and rapid response to violations of press and media freedom and on capacity building and professional development of journalists.</p> <p>The second edition of the “Media Freedom Rapid Response” (MFRR-II), which runs until October 2023, documented 669 alerts with 1121 attacked persons or entities. It offered financial support to 22 legal cases in 11 countries involving media outlets and journalists facing legal threats. With regard to the emergency fund for practical support, the project received 457 requests for practical support and in 44 of these cases delivered grants with an average of 1,600 euro per grant. Regarding advocacy and awareness-raising in the field of media freedom and safety of journalists, MFRR published 94 statements and open letters addressing key press and media freedom issues in 27 countries. The fourth edition of the Media Freedom Rapid Response started in November 2023 and will run until end October 2025.</p> <p>The Free Media Hub EAST project, started in July 2023, will support existing and established independent Russian and Belarusian media working in the EU. It will award over EUR 2.2 million in grants, provide assistance and psychological support, invest in technological solutions and strengthen cooperation between local hubs where these exiled media are located in the EU (mainly Czechia, Germany, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania).</p> <p>The “Cross-border investigative journalism fund” IJ4EU, allowed almost 300 journalists throughout the EU to carry out investigative collaborations on transnational subjects in the public interest. The IJ4EU fund allocated 1,110,868.65 EUR to 43 projects. An additional 15,000 EUR was awarded to three journalistic teams under the IJ4EU Impact Award. It also offered specialist training and mentoring for freelancers and provided practical, legal and editorial assistance to all grantees, along with advocacy support in the event of press freedom violations. Support to investigative journalism will continue under the “Collaborative Investigative Journalism Initiative” project, from July 2023 to June 2025.</p> <p>Outside the EU, Delegations continue to implement measures in line with the Handbook for Safety of Journalists. Training and knowledge material has been developed for EU Delegations to deal with cases of abuses against journalists. The EU also supports action grants implemented by civil society and media organisations to provide legal assistance, capacity building, financial support, safety and cybersecurity training. The EU continues its financial and technical assistance, working with partners in the media sector and other trusted actors such as European Endowment for Democracy. Most EU Delegations have identified freedom of expression/media freedom and safety of journalists as a key priority in their Human Rights Country Strategies 2021-2024. Examples include the NDICI-Human Rights and Democracy Programme, which Inter alia supports projects to enhance professional skills, abilities and capacities of journalists, bloggers and media workers. It also supports self-regulatory and standard-setting initiatives developed by media. Under this Programme, the EU allocated</p>

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		<p>country-specific funding for 2022-2023 (managed by the EU Delegations) that allow for local actions supporting these objectives. The NDICI Programme also include a Global Action for Supporting Media and Harnessing New Technologies with the aim to promoting and protecting democracy, countering threats to democracy and electoral processes, safeguard media independence and countering the challenges of new technologies.</p> <p>Under IPA instrument (Civil Society Facility and Media Programme), the Commission has an established track-record in supporting independent media and media pluralism in the Western Balkans and Türkiye with a number of holistic and specialised regional programmes, worth more than EUR 42 million (October 2023). The programmes target different systemic aspects of media freedom, but mainly the broader aspects of enabling environment for media (including safety of journalists, fighting disinformation, etc.), access to finance and economic sustainability, professional standards of media and quality content. Some examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Support to Media Freedom and Pluralism in the Western Balkans” (EUR 10 million, March 2023 – Aug 2025) aimed to improve the economic sustainability of independent media outlets and improve their capacities for quality reporting and facilitate regional exchanges and networking between media outlets and other media market actors. • Three direct action grants to European Endowment for Democracy for targeted support to media outlets and civic actors (EUR 37.6 million of which around half for media) and yearly operating grant (EUR 2 million per year): a flexible re-granting scheme for pro-democracy support in fast changing environments. <p>In the last five years, the EU has also financed projects worth more than EUR 120 million in countries outside the EU to support freedom of expression and independent media. Examples of actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific support to journalists and the media in Ukraine (EUR 30 million) • Support for independent journalism in for the Southern Neighbourhood amounted to EUR 15 million in 2021. Grants were carried out through the European Endowment for Democracy • A substantial programme to support Russian independent media came into force in February 2022, providing emergency support as well as longer-term capacity building and other support measures. • Start of the procedures for selection of relevant organizations to implement activities for Protecting Independent Media in the context of the Thematic Framework Partnerships for Human Rights and Democracy. • ProtectDefenders intensifying their work to protect journalists in countries in crisis. In 2021, the mechanism supported about 550 journalists worldwide. • In Afghanistan two programmes for media inside the country and working from abroad have been agreed with UNESCO and Internews. • Media Support and Assises de Journalism.

EDAP area	Objectives and Actions	State of play/ Deliverables
		<p>Under the Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy programme 2021-2027, an estimated EUR 185 million are earmarked for support to independent media and harnessing digitalisation worldwide. The new Financial Framework Partnership Agreement on Protecting Independent Media will allow for more strategic cooperation with selected NGOs that work to protect media freedom across the globe. The agreement is signed for a duration of four years (2023-2027) with three leading consortia. Up to EUR 20 million will be made available. The objectives are to strengthen the resilience of journalists and media outlets at risk; combat hate speech, extremism, and disinformation; provide young journalists operating in difficult conditions access to professional development and learning opportunities; build and consolidate cross-border networks of media development organisations and CSOs.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Media Freedom and Rapid Response IJ4 EU – Investigative Journalism for Europe Handbook for Safety of Journalists International cooperation and development – Calls for proposals and tenders Home - SafeJournalists The European Endowment for Democracy (EED) (democracyendowment.eu) WB6 MEDIA Support to Media Freedom and Pluralism in the Western Balkans</p>
	<p><i>Set up expert group on SLAPPs to gather and exchange best practices on legal support for journalists and other actions</i></p>	<p>The expert group on SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) was set up in 2021 and assisted the Commission in the preparation of the anti-SLAPP package. The group, composed of legal practitioner and partitioners' associations met 8 times. The group continues to support Member States in the implementation of the Recommendation.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Expert group against SLAPP</p>
	<p><i>Present initiative to protect journalists and civil society against SLAPPs</i></p>	<p>In April 2022, the Commission put forward a package of measures against SLAPPs, proposing legislative safeguards to curb abusive litigation against journalists and human rights defenders, as well as wide range of non-legislative measures to support action at national level to address some of the root causes of SLAPP, such as defamation rules. On 30 November, the European Parliament and the Council reached a provisional political agreement on the anti-SLAPP directive.</p> <p>With regard to the Recommendation, Member States should report the aggregated data collected at national level to the Commission on a yearly basis starting from the end of 2023, in full respect of data protection requirements. The Commission will publish a yearly summary of the received contributions.</p>

EDAP area	Objectives and Actions	State of play/ Deliverables
		<p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Proposal for a Directive on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings ('Strategic lawsuits against public participation)</p>
	<p><i>Support EU cooperation between national media councils, other media self-regulatory bodies, independent media regulators and networks of journalists, and initiatives fostering journalistic partnerships and standards</i></p>	<p>The Commission supports cooperation between national media councils, other media self-regulatory bodies, independent media regulators and networks of journalists, and initiatives fostering journalistic partnerships and standards, notably via financial support to projects under various programmes (e.g. Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, Creative Europe).</p> <p>One example is the pilot project “Media Councils in the Digital Age” focusing on highlighting the important role of press and media councils in times of decreasing trust towards journalists and media outlets combined with increasing disinformation on new media. It looks at the digital challenges through 4 main components: academic work to provide data and analysis regarding existing press councils, awareness campaign to promote media self-regulation, visibility and exchanges of media councils’ works on the international scene and strengthening of existing organizations or support to future organizations. This project will be continued by the “Media Councils in the Digital Age 4” project, running from July 2023 to June 2025. Other projects include projects under the Horizon Europe call “Media for democracy – democratic media” or project ‘European Excellence exchange for journalism’ (funded from the Creative Europe programme) that provides a knowledge hub for journalists to connect, based on mutual trust and common rules</p> <p>Another example is the programme “Strengthening Quality News and Independent Journalism in the Western Balkans and Turkey II” (EUR 2.2 million; Jan 2023 – Dec 2025), to strengthen trust-based engagement of citizens and media, provide resources and establish conditions for media and journalists to produce high quality content through education, training, mentoring and editorial support, technical and financial support, publishing and promoting outstanding achievements in quality and investigative journalism.</p> <p>Under the EU-Council of Europe Horizontal Facility, regional and country specific allocations in the Western Balkans aim at ensuring the respect of both rights and obligations of journalists, associations of journalists, self-regulatory bodies, and other media organisations, in line with the European Court of Human Rights case-law system and Council of Europe’s standards , including by working with Media Regulatory Authorities and the justice sector (EUR 4 million Jan 2023-Dec 2026).</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Media Councils in the Digital Age</p> <p>Promoting and protecting freedom of expression and media - Horizontal Facility (coe.int)</p> <p>Horizon Europe projects on the future of liberal democracy</p>

EDAP area	Objectives and Actions	State of play/ Deliverables
	<p><i>Set up the Media Ownership Monitor and develop further possible guidance on the transparency of media ownership</i></p>	<p>The Pilot project on the Media Ownership Monitor started in September 2021 and its second phase concluded in September 2023. It provides a database with information on ownership and control of the most relevant news media in 27 Member States. The project covers the most relevant media, which have been selected in terms of demand (market share) and/or agenda (quotation and/or recommendation by other news services). The samples include both national and regional media. All data was collected from publicly available sources.</p> <p>In September 2023, the Commission adopted a proposal for a European Media Freedom Act regulation and an accompanying recommendation on internal safeguards for editorial independence and ownership transparency in the media sector. The Regulation sets a number of information requirements for media service providers: legal name, contact details, names of direct, indirect and beneficial owners. The Recommendation encourages Member States to entrust regulators with developing and maintaining a dedicated online media ownership database with disaggregated data about different types of media. Interinstitutional negotiations are ongoing.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Euromedia Ownership Monitor European Media Freedom Act regulation Recommendation on internal safeguards for editorial independence and ownership transparency in the media sector</p>
	<p><i>Foster measures for the transparent and fair allocation of state advertising</i></p>	<p>The European Media Freedom Act proposal, adopted by the Commission in September 2022, provides for requirements for the allocation of state advertising to media, so that it is allocated according to transparent, objective, proportionate and non-discriminatory criteria and through open, proportionate and non-discriminatory procedures. Member States would have to make public the amounts spent and the beneficiaries of state advertising. Interinstitutional negotiations on the proposal are ongoing.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>European Media Freedom Act regulation Recommendation on internal safeguards for editorial independence and ownership transparency in the media sector</p>
	<p><i>Map options for further support for media diversity and foster a European approach on the prominence of audiovisual media services of general interest</i></p>	<p>An independent study on media plurality and diversity online was published on 16 September 2022. It maps legislative measures and industry practices related to the prominence and findability of general interest content and services in addition to assessing the effectiveness of such measures. The study found that content and services with increased prominence can have an impact on exposure diversity and media pluralism. However, assessing the real-life impact that the current industry measures on content prioritisation may have on media pluralism and on users' exposure to media diversity is challenging. The reasons are linked to the use of algorithm-driven content recommendations and the sheer lack of access to data. The</p>

EDAP area	Objectives and Actions	State of play/ Deliverables
		<p>study then proposes and discusses policy options and recommendations on how to develop transparent and accountable prominence regimes.</p> <p>Exchanges of best practices and a workshop concerning the prominence of general interest content in European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services ('ERGA') took place over the course of 2021 and resulted in a report. A workshop feeding into the final deliverable was organised in September. ERGA's work continued in 2022 through further guidance/analysis concerning the effectiveness of algorithms and recommendation systems in ensuring the appropriate prominence of audio-visual media services of general interest, as well as the prominence of European works. The appropriate prominence of audiovisual media services of general interest under Article 7a of the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) is one of the areas in which the new European Board for Media Services is to issue guidance under the future European Media Freedom Act.</p> <p>The Commission also dedicates a full budget line ("Multimedia Actions") to support the production of independent news on EU affairs. Beneficiaries include Euronews, radio networks, data-journalism initiatives or the European Newsroom bringing together leading European news agencies. This is complemented by a number of pilot media and citizen empowerment projects, such as the European Media Platforms, aiming to improve EU citizens' access to trusted information, or a call to provide young people with news on matters of relevance and importance across Europe, thereby increasing their democratic engagement. Other grants are available to support small scale online media in running research and media literacy activities to support the fight against disinformation, as well as supporting news media in the face of "news deserts".</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Study on media plurality and diversity online European media platforms ERGA – European Regulators Group for Audio-visual Media Services report Multimedia actions Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu)</p>
<p>Countering dis-information and information manipulation</p>	<p><i>In this context, the Commission services and the EEAS will work with Member States, civil society and industry towards refined common definitions and methodologies in order to</i></p>	<p>The EEAS, in cooperation with the Commission, Member States, international partners and other stakeholders advanced the work towards a common understanding and terminology and in June 2021 a non-paper with a proposal for the conceptual definition of Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference ('FIMI') that better characterizes the threat faced in the information environment was distributed. The terminology has since been used in multiple documents of the European</p>

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	<p><i>address different categories of disinformation and influence activities.</i></p>	<p>Union as well as outside, including the G7 Foreign Ministers Communique 2022 and the Joint Statement on EU-NATO Cooperation 2023.</p> <p>Civil society, academia, industry and other stakeholders were consulted through a dedicated series of expert round tables held throughout 2021-22 and collaboration to promote a common understanding and ensure that analytical capabilities are in place to match FIMI criteria. Work will continue, including through dedicated projects, to further refine the understanding of the different building blocks of the FIMI definition. Civil society has also taken note of the definition, as exemplified by a report of EU DisinfoLab in 2023.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>EU Strategic Compass on Security and Defense FIMI Conclusions (July 2022) EUvsDisinfo EEAS Stratcom Activity report 2021; EEAS Stratcom Activity report 2022 G7 Rapid Response Mechanism Annual Report 2021 G7 Foreign Ministers Statement 2022 Joint Declaration on EU-NATO cooperation EU DisinfoLab – FIMI : towards a European redefinition of foreign interference</p>
	<p><i>Develop the EU's toolbox for countering foreign interference and influence operations, including new instruments that allow imposing costs on perpetrators, as well as strengthening the EEAS strategic communication activities and taskforces</i></p>	<p>The EEAS provided a joint EEAS-EC concept paper on the FIMI Toolbox in April 2021, identifying four dimensions of the FIMI Toolbox: situational awareness, resilience building, disruption / regulation, and measures related to EU external action, including CFSP and diplomatic responses. Each area comprises different types of instruments, with the potential to either prevent or lower the impact of FIMI, to deter them from pursuing these activities or to respond to them. In March 2023 the Horizontal Working Party on Enhancing Resilience and Countering Hybrid Threats (HWP ERCHT) acknowledged the updated concept paper on FIMI and the existence of the toolbox.</p> <p>Council Conclusions on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) were adopted by the Council in July 2022. The EEAS and Commission services have continued discussions with Member States regarding instruments that allow raising costs on perpetrators.</p> <p>Efforts are ongoing to further strengthen internal capacities and capabilities of the EEAS Strategic communication teams and taskforces, including the network of 27 Stratcom Officers to guide strategic communication efforts on the ground.</p> <p>The EU has also made use of its diplomatic tools to address FIMI by state actors. Most notably, from March 2022, the EU imposed sanctions on Russia Today (RT), Sputnik and other outlets for their crucial role in information manipulation and interference related to the aggression against Ukraine (full list in annex XV to Regulation 833/2014). In addition, public</p>

EDAP area	Objectives and Actions	State of play/ Deliverables
		<p>channels, such as EUvsDisinfo, continue to raise awareness about pro-Kremlin information manipulation and interference and to expose its coordinated nature. In 2022, the EUvsDisinfo project reached over 2,7 million people via their website and 19,3 million more via their social media channels.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Strategic Compass FIMI Conclusions (July 2022) EUvsDisinfo EEAS Stratcom Activity report 2021; EEAS Stratcom Activity report 2022 EU sanctions map</p>
	<p><i>Put in place a new protocol to strengthen existing cooperation structures to fight disinformation, both in the EU and internationally</i></p>	<p>EU action in response to the unprecedented waves of foreign information manipulation and interference and disinformation in the current geopolitical context has shown that cooperation between different EU institutions works well. The existing cooperation structures have proven to be flexible and responsive to changing needs, without needing to put in place new formal arrangements. Engagement in the respective networks, such as the Rapid Alert System and the Network against Disinformation, has proven highly useful to ensure timely sharing of analysis, insights and products as well as of communication plans and strategies.</p> <p>The EEAS works on addressing foreign information manipulation and interference ('FIMI') including disinformation through the EEAS Stratcom and the EEAS-managed Rapid Alert System (RAS), to facilitate daily exchanges with EU Member States and international partners.</p> <p>The Commission services tackle different aspects of disinformation within the EU (e.g. on elections, cybersecurity, media freedom, online platforms). Since 2018, the Commission has stepped up its internal coordination via the Network against Disinformation (NaD) composed of the Commission services and Representations in EU MSs, with EEAS and European Parliament as observers. Through the network the Commission pools and leverages the capacities so that it can offer a powerful response possible to disinformation through coordinated action. Immediately after the invasion of Ukraine, the Commission intensified its cooperation with online platforms to monitor the implementation of the sanctions against Russian media outlets and to coordinate their efforts to fight disinformation related to the conflict.</p> <p>The Commission and Member States also work together in the framework of the European Cooperation Network on Elections to discuss the cases of interference in the electoral processes and exchange on best practices. Cooperation between the relevant networks is crucial. Therefore, the Rapid Alert System held a joint session with the Horizontal Working Party on Enhancing Resilience and Countering Hybrid Threats as well as the European Cooperation Network on Elections in December 2023.</p>

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		<p>In its external action, the EU has also funded independent regional organisations engaged in promoting Civic Tech for Democracy and the access to reliable information around electoral processes.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Activity Report 2021 Activity Report 2022 EEAS Stratcom Report on FIMI Threats Management Plan 2022 DG Communication</p>
	<p><i>Develop a common framework and methodology for collecting systematic evidence on foreign interference and a structural dialogue with civil society, private industry actors and other relevant stakeholders to regularly review the threat situation</i></p>	<p>The EEAS has proposed a common analytical framework and methodology to collect systematic evidence of FIMI activity. This methodology will support even more effective and collaborative information sharing and analysis both within the EU and internationally. The first EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats was published in February 2023, which aims to provide a proof-of-concept for the common framework that enables mutual sharing of complex insights in a timely, interoperable fashion and at scale. In this vein, the EEAS is facilitating a community approach to information sharing in the form of an Information Sharing and Analysis Centre (ISAC), which aims to facilitate the collection and sharing of data on FIMI incidents among trusted partners.</p> <p>The commitment of the EU and the United States in the EU-US Trade and Technology Council (TTC) includes a shared standard for structured threat information exchange on FIMI between the European Union and the United States, as well as the underlying common methodology for identifying, analysing and countering FIMI. Moving forward, the European Union and the United States plan to support the use of this standard by stakeholders across the globe. In October 2023, during the EU-US Summit both sides agreed to expand collaboration on countering FIMI based on common principles, such as dedicated strategies, internal organizational structures, capacity, civil society and multilateral engagement. This cooperation should aim to support like-minded partners in countering FIMI, including via US and EU coordinated activities, while safeguarding freedom of expression, together with partner countries. Continued dialogue with civil society, private industry and other relevant stakeholders has been established. Dedicated exchanges with experts, including expert roundtables on threat assessment to ensure insights from external stakeholders on the situational awareness on FIMI and inform approaches.</p> <p>A new EU project was launched implemented by the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) (EUR 3 million) to develop practical support tools to facilitate the sharing of FIMI information, insights and evidence between different actors.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p>

EDAP area	Objectives and Actions	State of play/ Deliverables
		The 1st EEAS Report on FIMI Threats FPI project on Countering Foreign Interference
	<p><i>Increase support for capacity-building of national authorities, independent media and civil society in third countries to detect and respond to disinformation and foreign influence operations</i></p>	<p>In October 2022, to mark the Global Media and Information Literacy Week, EUvsDisinfo launched a “LEARN” section, a dedicated webpage explaining the mechanisms, tactics, common narratives and actors behind FIMI and disinformation and information manipulation.</p> <p>In the Western Balkans region, the EU has engaged in proactive and factual communication and capacity building of institutions to deal with FIMI threats. In 2022, the EU supported over 250 journalists discussing effective ways of promoting professional journalism in the region. In 2021, support was provided to organise the EU-Western Balkans Media Literacy Conference to discuss disinformation, the challenges of professional journalism, the importance of media literacy in the new media environment and resilience strategies. Support was also provided to new studies such as: “Evolution of Propaganda Narratives on Ukraine” and a capacity building initiative “Connecting media community in the age of disinformation” (Sarajevo, 24 February 2023).</p> <p>The Civil Society Facility and Media Programme in favour of the Western Balkans and Türkiye also includes a number of actions aimed at countering disinformation in IPA III beneficiaries. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Building Trust in Media in South East Europe: Support to Journalism as a Public Good” (EUR 3 million Jul 2023 - Jul 2026)“Our Media: A civil society action to generate media literacy and activism, counter polarisation and promote dialogue” (EUR 1.3 million; Feb 2023 – Jan 2025) - “Reporting Digital Rights and Freedoms” (EUR 1.3 million; Jan 2023 - Dec 2025) to enhance knowledge and skills of media and civil society on the link between digital rights violations and disinformation . - “SEECheck network – fighting disinformation and misinformation through a network of fact-checkers” (EUR 1.24 million; Jan 2023 - Jun 2026) aim at strengthening professional networks, independent media and CSOs. <p>With the Eastern Partnership, the EU COVID-19 Solidarity Programme adopted in 2020 included a EUR 10m component to enable local CSOs to mitigate the effects on the most vulnerable groups and those disproportionately affected. This component includes support to watchdog and advocacy activities of local CSOs related to countering disinformation on COVID-19, monitoring and reporting on measures restricting civic freedoms and their repeal.</p> <p>The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility has supported in 2019 the creation of a regional South Caucasus research lab on digital forensics, building a network of research specialist tackling notably Kremlin-influenced disinformation. In addition, assistance is given through the EUR 8 million EU for Independent Media programme that provide support to</p>

EDAP area	Objectives and Actions	State of play/ Deliverables
		<p>improve the immediate and long-term financial viability of independent media outlets in the region. Overall, the EU is currently supporting the independent media landscape in Eastern partner countries with more than EUR 30 million .</p> <p>Support was also provided to independent media and CSOs countering FIMI and disinformation in Ukraine and Moldova. Through the Eastern Partnership’s regional EU4Independent project journalists from the region were invited to raise awareness about the EU and to foster regional contacts. In June 2022, 80 representatives of fact-checkers, journalists and CSOs from the Eastern neighbourhood and Central Asia were invited to Brussels.</p> <p>The EU has also been providing support to Russian independent media forced to flee the Russian regime and has also worked to countering Kremlin information manipulation and disinformation.</p> <p>In the Southern Neighbourhood, the Media package for the South from 2021 (EUR 15 M, 2022-2026) provides comprehensive support to the independent media sector to ensure it remains independent, plural and resilient, and is able to defend against current threats and can promote critical civic-minded thinking. It further promotes the cooperation and coordination among media support organizations to counter disinformation and work with the most vulnerable and independent media via support to European Endowment for Democracy.</p> <p>In the MENA region, the work of the EU Regional Media Officer (RMO) provided an additional tool for the EU to engage with Arabic-speaking audiences. Engagement with local experts from civil society, academia and media has taken place to follow the evolution of the multi-faceted FIMI threat in the region and to raise awareness. Since February 2022, the RMO conducted more than 150 interviews with pan-Arab channels on the Russian invasion of Ukraine to counter FIMI led by the Kremlin.</p> <p>In the Indo-Pacific region work has been initiated to cooperate with CSOs and provide support to independent media outside of EU’s immediate neighbourhood.</p> <p>Sub-Saharan Africa Task Force has been established in response to the urgent need to strengthen the EU’s stratcom capabilities in context of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and mounting foreign information manipulation and interference in the region.</p> <p>As part of wider efforts to tackle FIMI, along with adoption of the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, since 2022 a pilot support to selected CSDP missions and operations has taken place, both civilian and military, to building resilience against FIMI.</p> <p>In addition, TAIEX has been actively supporting enlargement and neighbourhood countries in countering disinformation. In the Western Balkans, an online TAIEX Regional Workshop was organised in 2022, followed by country-specific events for Montenegro, Albania and Kosovo. Several TAIEX workshops were held in 2023, namely a Workshop on</p>

EDAP area	Objectives and Actions	State of play/ Deliverables
		<p>Challenges and changes to existing mechanisms aimed at sanctioning the spread of disinformation and a TAIEX Study Visit on Models of cooperation mechanisms for establishing a monitoring body to combat disinformation and hate speech. In the neighbourhood, a two-day TAIEX multi-country workshop on Strategies to Counter Disinformation was organised in February 2023 to provide support to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia to detect, analyse and devise adequate responses to disinformation. As follow-up, TAIEX workshops are planned in 2024, upon requests submitted by Moldova and Ukraine, articulated, respectively, around the thematic of elections and FIMI and collaboration with African counterparts in countering disinformation.</p> <p>The new Financial Framework Partnership Agreement on Protecting Independent Media aims at building the capacity of media actors to counter disinformation, among other objectives. It will make up to EUR 20 million available in 2023-2027. Under NDICI – Global Europe, an action is in place to improve awareness and resilience to disinformation in the age of AI. This action includes the development of relationships between actors in Europe and a select number of countries in Africa and LAC, and the strengthening of south-south cooperation.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Newly-funded Horizon Europe projects (under 2021 and 2022 calls) on democratic politics and the rule of law in the EU’s neighborhoods (East and South) and EU candidate countries</p> <p>TAIEX online workshop on the new geopolitical consequences of disinformation in the Western Balkans</p> <p>TAIEX Workshop on Challenges and changes to existing mechanisms aimed at sanctioning the spread of disinformation</p> <p>TAIEX Workshop on Challenges and changes to existing mechanisms aimed at sanctioning the spread of disinformation</p>
	<p><i>Issue</i> <i>Guidance</i> <i>for</i> strengthening the Code of Practice on Disinformation</p>	<p>On 26 May 2021, the Commission published guidance on how to strengthen the Code of Practice on Disinformation, following an evaluation of its functioning since the setting up in 2018.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>Commission Guidance COM(2021) 262 final</p>
	<p><i>Convene the signatories of the Code of Practice and relevant stakeholders groups to strengthen the code according to the guidance</i></p>	<p>The strengthened Code of Practice on Disinformation has been signed and presented on the 16 June 2022 by 34 signatories including major online platforms, actors from the online advertising industry, smaller or specialised platforms, research and civil society organisations, fact-checkers and providers of technical solutions to counter disinformation.</p> <p>The new Code aims to achieve the objectives of the Commission’s Guidance presented in May 2021, by setting a broader range of commitments and measures to counter online disinformation. These include demonetising the dissemination of disinformation; guaranteeing transparency of political advertising; empowering users; enhancing cooperation with fact-checkers; facilitating researchers access to data; and ensuring the integrity of the platforms’ services by implementing and promoting safeguards against a list of manipulative behaviour and practices that are not permitted across their services. The</p>

EDAP area	Objectives and Actions	State of play/ Deliverables
		<p>list includes forms of manipulative behaviour which can spread disinformation, such as the creation of inauthentic accounts or botnets, the deployment of deceptive manipulated media (such as “deep fakes”, “cheap fakes”), and the inauthentic coordination of content creation or amplification, including attempts to deceive/manipulate platforms algorithms (such as ways to mislead people about popularity of content). On that basis, signatories committed to adopt, reinforce and implement clear policies, covering the range of behaviours and practices identified. Given the evolving nature of such tactics, techniques and procedures employed by malicious actors, this list will be periodically reviewed.</p> <p>Commission services and the EEAS have also intensified their cooperation with online platforms to coordinate efforts to fight FIMI and disinformation related to the major geopolitical crises. The Commission, within the framework of the Code, has been closely following the implementation of the EU sanctions on RT, Sputnik and other sanctioned outlets by the platforms. The signatories of the Code are holding regular meetings to exchange information and coordinate their actions to curb disinformation related to specific crisis situations in the framework of the Permanent Task-force and its Crisis Response Subgroup.</p> <p>European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) has created a dedicated task-force which monitors the situation regarding disinformation campaigns linked to the war in Ukraine. Since 24 March 2022, the EDMO fact-checking network has produced by October 2023 more than 2,500 fact-checks on the war and several related investigations, reports and dedicated periodic insights.</p> <p>In addition to this, Member States can request support under the technical support instrument to develop the required capacity in order to manage disinformation and address foreign interference campaigns effectively.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>The 2022 Code of Practice on Disinformation European Digital Media Observatory EDMO Task Force on disinformation on the war in Ukraine Technical Support Instrument (TSI) (Europa.eu)</p>
	<p><i>Set up a permanent framework for the monitoring of the code</i></p>	<p>The 2022 Code of Practice on Disinformation comes with a strengthened monitoring framework based on qualitative reporting elements and service-level indicators measuring the effectiveness of its implementation. Signatories agreed to set up a Transparency Centre, providing a clear overview to the public of the policies they put in place to implement their commitments, and will update it regularly with the relevant data.</p> <p>End of January 2023, signatories of the Code of Practice have submitted their first baseline reports, providing an initial state of play of the steps taken to implement commitments and measures and a first set of qualitative and quantitative reporting covering the first month of implementation. Signatories who have been designated as Very Large Online Platforms, as</p>

EDAP area	Objectives and Actions	State of play/ Deliverables
		<p>defined in the Digital Services Act (DSA) report every six-months on their actions taken under the Code, while other signatories report once per year. All major online platform signatories of the Code (Google, Meta, Microsoft and TikTok) have delivered a second set of reports in September 2023, covering a full 6-month period of implementation. For the first time, the reporting exercise also includes the publication of an initial set of Structural Indicators, providing insight about disinformation on platforms' services.</p> <p>All the reports are publicly available in the Transparency Centre, launched in February 2023.</p> <p>Signatories also agreed to establish a framework for further collaboration through a permanent Task-force and several Subgroups, with specific work strands and deliverables. Signatories will continue to meet on a regular basis to ensure the Code remains fit for purpose, including to reduce disinformation around the war in Ukraine.</p> <p><u>Useful links:</u> The 2022 Code of Practice on Disinformation; https://disinfocode.eu/</p>
	<p><i>Support new innovative projects to fight disinformation under various EU programmes, in particular by civil society organisations and higher education institutions, with journalists' involvement</i></p>	<p>EU allocates resources on an annual basis to support projects to counter foreign information manipulation and interference, including disinformation and hybrid threats, for instance under the Union programs Horizon Europe or Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV), Erasmus+ and through projects financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).</p> <p>Under Erasmus+, support is available to develop young people's digital competences and media literacy with a view to increasing young people's resilience to disinformation, fake news and propaganda. 2021 eTwinning activities focussed on media literacy and disinformation, with a dedicated conference in October 2021, a toolkit for teachers entitled "spot and fight disinformation", and numerous eTwinning collaborations such as "Lie Detectors", "Better Internet for Kids", and "Anne Frank House".</p> <p>In March 2022 the Commission launched the updated Digital Competences Framework (DigComp) 2.2, which proposes a common understanding of what it means to be digitally competent in 21 century, including specific reference to the need for critical engagement with information online, disinformation, misinformation and others.</p> <p>Research projects also continued to be funded under Horizon Europe. Under the work programme 2021-22 projects started to work on research on disinformation in the context of a post-pandemic world (EUR 9M), politics and the impact of online social networks and new media (EUR 9M), on combatting disinformation and restoring trust in the digital world (EUR 8M), and on tools to fight disinformation based on AI for both media professionals and citizens (EUR 18M). The work-programmes for 2023-2024 of Horizon Europe have earmarked some additional EUR 30M to fund research on foreign</p>

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		<p>information manipulation and interference (FIMI) and on AI-based solutions to ensure pluralistic access to meaningful information, quality content and trustworthy online interaction for media professionals and citizens.</p> <p>In addition, the European Commission in October 2022 published guidelines for teachers and educational staff to promote digital literacy and tackle disinformation through education and training as part of its Digital Education Action Plan. The guidelines, available in all EU official languages, were developed with the support of the education and training community, academia, NGOs, broadcasters and the private sector.</p> <p>The EU supported the development of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO). Since 2020 EDMO has built a dedicated community that leads the way in tracking, exposing and countering disinformation. EDMO comprises a central digital platform and national and regional hubs that leverage their knowledge of local information environments to detect, analyse and expose disinformation campaigns in Europe. With 14 EDMO hubs now in place, the EDMO network covers all 27 EU Member States as well as Norway, in the EEA.</p> <p>The work of EDMO and its hubs has been instrumental in the context of the war in Ukraine and Russian propaganda, identifying thousands of disinformation instances related to the war through fact-checks and issuing reports and investigations on emerging and trending narratives. Building on this, EDMO is setting up a special European elections task force dedicated to detect early signs of potentially dangerous disinformation campaigns that might spread across the EU and coordinate dedicated media literacy activities. The task force will also provide its expertise to European institutions in the framework of the preparation to the European elections.</p> <p>The Commission also supported the development of the Code of Professional Integrity for European fact-checkers which was published on 15 September 2022¹. The Code's standards, which cover matters ranging from quality sourcing to non-partisanship and financial transparency, must be adhered to for fact-checking organisations to become verified members of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN), which is a network of fact-checking organisations operating independently, ethically and with a commitment to serving the public interest.</p> <p><i>Useful links:</i></p> <p>European Digital Media Observatory Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu) European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN)</p>

¹ The Code has been developed through a project involving fact-checking organisations from more than 30 countries across Europe. The final version of the Code was approved by 44 out of the 45 organisations that took part.

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		<p>Newly-funded Horizon Europe projects (under 2021 and 2022 calls) on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools to fight disinformation based on AI for both media professionals and citizens • AI-based solutions to ensure pluralistic access to meaningful information, quality content and trustworthy online interaction for media professionals and citizens <p>Horizon 2020 projects on debunking fake news and providing journalists with tools to counter disinformation and misinformation (already finalised) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FANDANGO - FAke News discovery and propagation from big Data ANalysis and artificial intelliGence Operations • WeVerify - WIDER AND ENHANCED VERIFICATION FOR YOU • TRUTHCHECK - Fake News Recognition applying Service-based Cross-Media Analytics • NEUTRAL - First real-time fact-checking tool to fight against the fake news and disinformation • Factmata - A SCORING SYSTEM FOR ONLINE CONTENT • DYNNET - Opinion Dynamics • GoodNews - Fake news detection in social networks using geometric deep learning • AI4Dignity - Collaborative AI Counters Hate <p>Horizon 2020 projects providing capacity building activities for civil society, media industry and other professionals include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU-HYBNET – Empowering a Pan-European Network to Counter Hybrid Threats (euhybnet.eu), network funded by Horizon 2020 • Horizon Europe: Detecting, analysing and countering foreign information manipulation and interference (europa.eu) (ATHENA, ADAC.io, SAUFEX) and • Developing a better understanding of information suppression by state authorities as an example of foreign information manipulation and interference (europa.eu) (RESONANT, ARM, DE-CONSPIRATOR)
	<p><i>Increase support and funding for and diversifying initiatives, including by civil society organisations, to promote media literacy and help citizens identify disinformation, within the EU and beyond</i></p>	<p>Creative Europe programme supports the promotion of media literacy mainly under the CROSS-SECTORAL strand.</p> <p>The Media Literacy scheme under the Creative Europe Programme aims at allowing citizens to develop a critical understanding and use of the media. To this end, media literacy actions encourage knowledge sharing and exchanges on media literacy policies and practices. Support envisages the development of innovative cross-border media literacy initiatives and communities across Europe, in a continuously changing digital media landscape and taking into account current user behaviour among various age groups. This runs in parallel to the support offered to news media in making adjustments to the structural and technological changes faced by the sector.</p>

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		<p>On 19 December 2022 the Commission launched a 990.500 EUR call for proposals on the European Festival of Journalism and Media Information Literacy, aimed at reinforcing dialogue, cooperation and partnership in the EU among journalists, media outlets including public service media, civil society organisations and media literacy professionals. Special attention will be on youth, including journalists’ students, people and social media.</p> <p>The Media Literacy Expert Group continues to deliberate, raise awareness and disseminate information about media literacy initiatives across Europe. The group meets formally twice a year.</p> <p>Continued funding is also available through Erasmus+ (i.e. 387 projects dealing with media literacy and tackling disinformation have been selected for funding in 2021) and the European Solidarity Corps (i.e. 46 projects dealing with media literacy and tackling disinformation” have been funded and another 39 with digital safety in 2021-22).</p> <p>The ACP-EU Culture Programme (EUR 40 m) in support to Cultural and Creative Industries in ACP countries aims inter alia to promote a number of cross-cutting societal issues such as visual literacy and a culture-based approach to education. By providing cascading grants on the ground, it contributes to educate and initiate young people to critical thinking, to distinguish between what is true and false, to promote the values of citizenship, question stereotypes, and other forms of discrimination.</p> <p>The EU-UNESCO Expert Facility also supports pluralistic media (e.g. voices of indigenous people in Mexican media and radios). A new round of the EU-UNESCO expert facility is in the inception phase.</p> <p>The Civil Society Facility and Media Programme includes a number of actions aimed at increasing media literacy in IPA III beneficiaries (see above for examples, such as the “building Trust in Media in South East Europe” project). The recently-started project “Our Media: A civil society action to generate media literacy and activism, counter polarisation and promote dialogue” (EUR 1.3 million; Feb 2023 – Jan 2025) further promotes greater media and information literacy by engaging media professionals and self-regulators, as well as youth in media freedom activism.</p> <p>In the Southern Neighbourhood, the Media package for the South from 2021 (EUR 15 million, 2022-2026) provides comprehensive support to the independent media sector to ensure it remains independent, plural and resilient, and is able to defend against current threats and can promote critical civic-minded thinking.</p> <p>Through its Regional and Urban Policy, the Commission also works to promote journalism and media literacy through a series of training and awareness raising activities. This includes (1) a specific open online teaching module for journalism higher education institutions with a focus on the EU and its cohesion policy, (2) the so-called “EUinMyRegion Media Trips” for local and regional journalists, followed todate by some 150 journalists, (3) a programme offering training, mentorship and practical training to journalism students and young journalists (“Youth4Regions”) as well as (4) a dedicated budget line of EUR7m under the information measures for the EU cohesion policy, which funds 12-month long information and communication actions on the added value of EU cohesion policy to citizens’ lives. To date more than 150 organisations</p>

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		<p>have received grants allowing their communication activities to reach millions of people through the press, TV and radio, events, and online platforms in 25 Member States.</p> <p>The NDICI Rapid Response pillar has been mobilised over EUR 50 million to support civil society and media across the world, including in the Western Balkans, Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood, Central Asia and Africa, to reinforce resilience of the information environment and societies at large to disinformation (through fact checking training, support to independent and investigative journalism i.a.).</p> <p>A successful initiative, set up under the previous MFF/Instrument contributing to Stability is still ongoing. A partnership with UNESCO, Social Media for Peace focusses national multi-stakeholder as an innovative solution to address content moderation issues at global, regional, and national level and bridge the gap between regulators, platforms, and civil societies.</p>