Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory

D1.2.A

Periodic Progress Report

Reporting Period: 1st Year (December 2022 – November 2023)

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Abstract	Periodic Progress Report includes the reporting by each partner of MedDMO Project on their actions and the consumed effort during the first year of the project (December 2022 – November 2023).
Keywords	Progress report, partner report, effort

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Glossary

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
DML	Digital Media Literacy
DoA	Description of Action
EC	European Commission
EDMO	European Digital Media Observatory
KPI's	Key Performance Indicators
KR	Key Result
MAAM	Media Asset Annotation and Management
MedDMO	Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory
PMs	Person Months
SO	Specific Objectives
SC	Status Call
WP	Working Package

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Executive Summary

This report provides comprehensive insights into the primary aims, objectives, and key results of the MedDMO project, along with an overview of the progress made by consortium partners in the initial year of the project (December 2022 – November 2023). Additionally, it offers a concise description of each partner's contribution to the tasks undertaken and the corresponding effort consumed. The adoption of this detailed report format aims to enhance the effectiveness of progress monitoring.

1 Explanation of the work carried out by the beneficiaries and Overview of the progress

The MedDMO project started on 1 December 2022 and has a duration of 30 months. The following sections describe the work carried out during the first reporting period, ending on 30 November 2023.

MedDMO aims to establish a new independent multinational hub expanding the regional coverage of EDMO into Greece, Cyprus and Malta, actively participate in EDMO's joint research activities and contribute to EDMO repositories. The initiative seeks to enhance the capabilities for disinformation discovery and monitoring through advanced verification tools, implement effective procedures for detecting and analysing disinformation campaigns and assess their impact from a cultural, societal, and legal perspective. Additionally, MedDMO will create a multidisciplinary network capable of quickly detecting, analysing and disclosing harmful disinformation campaigns at regional, national, and multinational level. Furthermore, the project focuses on supporting citizens, local media and public authorities conducting media literacy campaigns and proposing processes to establish a digital media monitoring ecosystem in collaboration with media stakeholders and public authorities, to achieve effective monitoring observance of the Code of Practice. MedDMO will also assess the effectiveness of policies to counter disinformation carrying out surveys, which will help identify existing gaps and propose regulations and policies that may constitute a roadmap towards future solutions. The MedDMO consortium comprises 9 partners:

1. Centre for Research and Technology Hellas (CERTH), Greece
2. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), Greece
3. University of Cyprus (UCY), Cyprus
4. Athens Technology Center (ATC), Greece
5. Cyprus University of Technology (CUT), Cyprus
6. Ellinika Hoaxes (EH), Greece
7. Agence France Presse (AFP), France
8. Times of Malta (ToM), Malta
9. University of Malta (UoM), Malta

1.1 Aims, Objectives and Key Results

The project has established three Strategic Aims (SA), each encompassing several Specific Objectives (SO), adding up to ten Specific Objectives as outlined in Part B of the Grant Agreement (section 1.1). Additionally, twelve Key Results have been identified in connection with the Specific Objectives, serving as expected outcomes to be delivered as specified in Part B of the Grant Agreement (section 3.1). Aims, Objectives and Key Results are summarised in the following.

STRATEGIC AIM 1: ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW MULTINATIONAL EDMO HUB

SO1. Establish a new independent multinational hub expanding the regional coverage of EDMO into three more member states not yet covered by the existing hubs.

- KR1: Create a multinational EDMO hub for Greece, Cyprus and Malta. This will include a web collaboration environment for the members of the hub, a public informational website and a communication campaign at multinational level.

SO2. Actively participate in EDMO joint research activities and contribute to EDMO repositories.

- KR3: Integrate the hub with the central EDMO project, in cooperation with EDMO's Executive Board.
- KR11: Cooperate with and contribute to EDMO and other national/multinational hubs.

SO3. Disseminate project outcomes and ensure the hub's sustainability.

- KR12: Promote actions to secure additional funds and support to preserve the independence of the hub.

STRATEGIC AIM 2: DISINFORMATION RESEARCH EMPOWERED WITH ADVANCED TOOLS

SO4. Establish effective procedures for the detection and analysis of disinformation campaigns.

- KR4: Ensure the production of a continuous flow of fact-checks to be contributed to the EDMO's repository. At least 30 fact-checks per month are expected. AFP will provide around 10 in Greek covering Greece and Cyprus and 2 in English. The English ones would cover Cyprus-related stories (migrations from Lebanon for instance) and the most important stories of the month in English for the Maltese readers). EH will provide around 10 per month in Greek, and the Times of Malta will provide around 8 per month in English.

SO5. Empower disinformation discovery and monitoring with advanced verification tools.

- KR5: Provide at least 30 analytical reports on specific disinformation campaigns and/or studies linked to relevant disinformation phenomena also assessing their impact in Greece, Cyprus, and Malta.
- KR7: Empower the fact checkers and establish ground rules and common fact-checking methodology, through training sessions. Among these, a thorough Fact-checking training session for professionals in Malta and several webinars on the usage of advanced verification tools.

SO6. Create a multidisciplinary network capable of quickly detecting, analysing and disclosing harmful disinformation campaigns at regional, national, and multinational level.

- KR2: Create a multinational and multidisciplinary community. MedDMO community is expected to have at least 40 members, which will be accepted following peer assessment of applications to ensure that they conform to the standards that will be set. To incentivize the community, challenges and

crowdsourcing tasks will be organized regularly. According to their engagement, members will also gain elevated access to technological resources.

STRATEGIC AIM 3: SUPPORT TO CITIZENS, LOCAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

SO7. Support the growth of local fact-checking.

- KR7: Empower the fact checkers and establish ground rules and common fact-checking methodology, through training sessions. Among these, a thorough Fact-checking training session for professionals in Malta and several webinars on the usage of advanced verification tools.

SO8. Assess the impact of disinformation campaigns.

- KR5: Provide at least 30 analytical reports on specific disinformation campaigns and/or studies linked to relevant disinformation phenomena also assessing their impact in Greece, Cyprus, and Malta.

SO9. Organize media literacy campaigns for Greece, Cyprus and Malta.

- KR6: Provide at least 15 media literacy campaigns or events at national/multi-national level to increase citizens' awareness and societal resilience.

S010. Support media and public authorities.

- KR8: Support provided to national authorities in their efforts to monitor the policies put in place by online platforms to limit the impact of disinformation.
- KR9: Monitor platform practices affecting Greece, Cyprus, and Malta.
- KR10: Monitor media plurality in Greece, Cyprus, and Malta.

During the first year of the project, which corresponds to the first reporting period, the MedDMO consortium has achieved significant progress towards accomplishing these SOs. The project has delivered according to the plan five deliverables and timely achieved the first seven milestones. There were only minor deviations compared to the Description of Action that are described in Section 5 of this report.

Submitted deliverables:

- D1.1 Data Management Plan and Quality Assurance (CERTH) - 28/02/2023
- D6.1.a MedDMO Communication plan and activities report (ATC) - 28/02/2023 (not uploaded to the EC portal because there will be three different versions, and we can only upload one, which will be the final version at the end of the project)
- D2.4 Multimedia Forensics Toolbox and Deep Fakes Knowledge base set up (CERTH) - 31/05/2023
- D2.1 MedDMO setup report (AUTH) - 30/11/2023
- D5.2.a - Media plurality report (UCY) - 30/11/2023 (not uploaded to the EC portal because there will be three different versions, and we can only upload one, which will be the final version at the end of the project)

Milestones:

MS1 (Project set up) has been fully achieved on time (M2, 30/01/2023). The associated means of verification include the availability of a ''project management manual'' as it is described in D1.1. The manual documents the guidelines for the partners of the project about the general project organisation, information management, reporting and quality assessment procedures.

MS4 (MedDMO initial setup) has been fully achieved on time (M3, 31/02/2023). ATC has set up the MedDMO's collaboration environment in Truly Media, allowing partners to work in a collective manner.

MS8 (Communication plan agreed and in operation) has been fully achieved on time (M3, 31/02/2023). The associated means of verification include the Dissemination and Communication Plan of the MedDMO project as described in D6.1 and the set up of MedDMO's social media channels (Facebook, Twitter). Furthermore, project announcements that were communicated during the three media events were taken up by national media outlets.

MS9 (Website) has been fully achieved with a small delay due to technical reasons. The website was released on 7 March 2023 with initial content established, including some fact-checks.

MS5 (Disinformation research mechanism set up in action) has been fully achieved on time (M10, 30/09/2023). The publication of fact-checks on the website and the integration into the EDMO repository has been initiated since M3, following the launch of the website and the set-up of MedDMO's collaboration environment in Truly Media.

MS10 (Integration with EDMO network) has been achieved through our active participation in several EDMO events and EDMO working groups, our responsiveness to EDMO surveys and our contribution to EDMO repository integrating the fact-checks produced by MedDMO. While the milestone had a deadline on M12, 30/11/2023, our collaboration with EDMO through all potential means will continue throughout the entire project lifecycle.

MS11 (Collaboration with external experts) has been successfully accomplished on schedule (M12, 30/11/2023). During the first year, we reached out to a diverse array of potential community members, including organisations, representatives from other projects, and individuals across various sectors, such as journalists, fact-checkers, and academics. Out of the 65 contacts made in the recruitment process, we received 49 positive replies for collaboration, surpassing the minimum target of 40 participating community members.

Specific Objectives – Key Results:

The consortium has achieved important progress towards the Specific Objectives and Key Results. In particular:

SO1 (KR1). Partners have successfully accomplished SO1 and KR1. The MedDMO hub has been established, expanding the regional coverage of EDMO into Greece, Cyprus and Malta. The MedDMO collaboration environment has been set up. The MedDMO website was launched on March 7, 2023, and has been operating smoothly since then, publishing fact-checks and useful content. The communication campaign was initiated through the media event during the kick off meeting in Thessaloniki, and media awareness events that took place during our plenary meetings in Cyprus and Malta, hosted by UCY and UoM. Furthermore, our communication and dissemination strategy is being implemented to extend the outreach of project results, through the MedDMO website and social media channels. Several communication and dissemination events and activities have been conducted as listed in our periodic report.

SO2 (KR3, KR11). Towards SO2 and KR3, KR11 partners achieved significant progress. More specifically, the MedDMO hub integration with the central EDMO hub has been achieved through the Truly Media collaboration platform. Furthermore, MedDMO partners have actively participated in several EDMO events and EDMO working groups. Additionally, we participate and always promptly respond to EDMO surveys. This is how we intend to continue our collaboration with EDMO and EDMO's hubs throughout the entire project lifecycle.

SO3 (KR12). Partners have made notable strides in disseminating project outcomes through various channels, aligning with the Dissemination and Communication Plan outlined in D6.1. The MedDMO website and social media platforms (X, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn) play a key role in the seamless dissemination of project outcomes, featuring a continuous stream of posts covering fact-checks, research content, media literacy material, and information about tools developed to assist fact-checkers in countering disinformation. The media events conducted during our plenary meetings received several mentions and references in national media channels and newspapers, providing a crucial contribution to the dissemination of project's aims and results. In the activities that had a serious impact on extending the outreach of MedDMO project, we must also include the community building recruitment process, the ongoing online survey in the context of T3.3, the first media literacy campaign and our collaboration with the broadcasting authorities in the three countries. In addition, several communication and dissemination events and activities have been conducted.

SO4 (KR4). Partners have achieved progress on establishing effective procedures for the detection of disinformation campaigns through the production of a continuous flow of fact-checks, which are published in MedDMO's website and also integrated to EDMO's repositories. More specifically, by mid-December 2023, 366 fact-checks had been published on the website, almost achieving the originally planned target of 375. The fact-checks of the month (one for each country) are also regularly provided to EDMO and published on the EDMO website.

SO5 (KR5, KR7). Towards SO5, significant progress has been achieved by consortium partners in empowering disinformation discovery and monitoring with advanced verification tools. In particular, various multimedia analysis tools have been made available to MedDMO fact-checkers to assist them in their daily work for detecting and countering disinformation, as detailed in D2.4 (Multimedia Forensics Toolbox). A more detailed description of the available tools is provided in T2.3 of this report. Regarding KR5, partners concluded on a specific framework and methodology to analyse a series of disinformation campaigns (a total of 30) across the three countries.

Important progress has also been achieved on KR7. AFP in late October 2023 organised – with the help of Times of Malta and the University of Malta – a two-day training workshop in Malta on countering disinformation (more details in T4.3). The feedback from the participants was very positive and additional training sessions will be scheduled the next period as a follow up of Malta's workshop.

SO6 (KR2). Towards SO6 and KR2, partners have achieved significant progress on establishing a multidisciplinary community in Greece, Cyprus, and Malta, recruiting a diverse range of members.

SO7 (KR7). Towards SO7, partners have achieved substantial progress on supporting the growth of local fact-checking. Specifically, the content on MedDMO's website, encompassing information on media literacy and details about available advanced verification tools, aims to raise awareness and educate potential fact-checkers, motivating journalists and other interested parties to engage in fact-checking. Additionally, the training workshop in Malta, organised by AFP in collaboration with Times of Malta and the University of Malta, was another initiative aiming to encourage and motivate journalists in the fact-checking process. Notably, there has been growth in the number of fact-checking organisations in the three countries during MedDMO's first year of operation. In Greece, two new fact-checking organisations, GREECE FACT CHECK and Fact Review, were founded. In Cyprus in the autumn of 2023 the first fact-checking organisation, Fact-Check Cyprus, which is associated with the Social Computing Research Center of CUT, was founded. In Malta, prior to the initiation of MedDMO, there was no established fact-checking organisation. Times of Malta is the first organisation in Malta to conduct fact-checking activities, which was achieved in the context of MedDMO. It's noteworthy that all these fact-checking organisations are collaborating with EDMO or are members of its network, and most are in the process of becoming (or already are), certified members of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN).

SO8 (KR5). Partners have made significant progress in assessing the impact of disinformation campaigns on society and democratic processes. Specifically, a comprehensive questionnaire has been developed to identify the features that make disinformation campaigns effective and to determine which segments of the MedDMO audience are most susceptible to disinformation. Currently, an online survey is actively collecting feedback from a representative sample of participants. The qualitative phase of the research is being planned in alignment with T3.2, T4.1, and T4.2.

SO9 (KR6). Towards achieving SO9 and KR6, partners have made significant progress in organising media literacy campaigns for Greece, Cyprus, and Malta. The initial step involves the identification of specific media literacy needs, through our current online survey. Simultaneously, the preparation of all necessary educational and training materials to support media literacy events and campaigns has been initiated. A first set of educational materials has been completed including a number of short and easy-to-understand video tutorials, an explanatory section on the website (Media Literacy/Tools) that demonstrates the capabilities of advanced verification tools and an educational guide about deepfakes (Deepfake Knowledge Base). All the aforementioned content is publicly available on the MedDMO's website, having also been presented to various audiences in several occasions. Furthermore, three specific target groups (journalism students, journalists, general public) have been identified for the production of tailored media literacy content. Moreover, a proposed plan by AUTH to organise at least 15 media literacy campaigns or events at national/multi-national level has been adopted (more details in T4.2). Furthermore, the first media literacy campaign has already been conducted by CERTH (more details in T4.2).

SO10 (KR8, KR9, KR10). Toward achieving SO5 and KR8, KR9, KR10, significant progress has been made by consortium partners in supporting media and public authorities. In particular, in the context of KR8, which concerns MedDMO's support provided to national authorities in their efforts to monitor the policies put in place by online platforms to limit the impact of disinformation, we have established a collaboration partnership with the broadcasting authorities in Cyprus, Greece, and Malta and have provided some initial support. Regarding KR9 which concerns monitoring relevant platform practices, a detailed analysis of Signatories' reports has been initiated, alongside further activities detailed in T5.1.

Towards KR10 concerning monitor media plurality in Greece, Cyprus, and Malta, the first annual media plurality report was published, aiming to offer a comprehensive understanding of the media dynamics in these countries (more detailed description in T5.3).

1.2 Explanation of the work carried per WP – KPIs

This section summarises the main achievements per WP, highlighting the progress achieved in each Task during the first year of the MedDMO project.

1.2.1 WP1 - Project coordination (CERTH, M1-30)

Activities: WP1 deals with project management and coordination, which involved the following activities in the first year of the project:

1) Establishing and maintaining effective project management processes, including administrative, financial, quality, and risk management.

2) Setting up the process of recording and managing the project-related datasets (DMP)

3) Developing smooth cooperation amongst partners, enabling smooth work progress and timely project reporting.

4) Providing an interface to the European Commission and assuring compliance with the Commission's reporting requirements, including ethical aspects.

Main achievements: Throughout the first year of our project, we accomplished the following within the scope of WP1:

1) Setting up the Management Structures, defining project structure, consortium bodies and organisational roles and decision making processes.
2) Setting up the preparation and organisation of meetings defining voting rules, quorum and veto rights.

3) Facilitating communication and knowledge management providing mailing lists, project file repository and teleconferencing tools.

4) Setting up the quality assurance plan including deliverables timeline, project reporting and monitoring processes.

5) Setting up the Risk management plan

6) Setting up the MedDMO Data Management Plan

7) Creating and providing to all consortium partners the MedDMO Workplan providing summarised info on Action points, Deliverables, Milestones, Risks, Key results and KPIs, effort allocation per WP and Task, Management structures and mailing lists.

T1.1 Project and financial management (CERTH)

T1.1 has focused on project and financial management, including setting up the Management Structures, Consortium bodies and organisational roles and decision making processes, facilitating communication and knowledge management providing mailing lists, a project file repository and teleconferencing tools, handling resource allocation and financial issues reporting to the EC and maintaining an interface to the European Commission, ensuring proper communication.

This task is led by CERTH and supported by all MedDMO partners. The established roles, processes and supported tools set up by this task are described thoroughly in D1.1 and were identified and provided to consortium partners from the initial stages of the project, ensuring a smooth operation on project coordination activities. The coordinator provided all the means to facilitate communication and knowledge management. During the first year three plenary meetings, 22 Status Calls and several WP/Task meetings were organised. All necessary data has been stored in the project file repository which is maintained by the Coordinator with contribution from all partners. Furthermore, all financial related issues were handled smoothly maintaining proper communication with the EC. This task was also responsible for producing this periodic report.

T1.2 Quality monitoring, ethics, risk and data management (CERTH)

T1.2 has focused on quality monitoring, ethics, risk and data management including setting up the quality assurance plan, the risk management plan, the Data Management Plan and the 'MedDMO Workplan.xlsx'. All the aforementioned are described thoroughly in D1.1.

The quality assurance plan including deliverables timelines, project reporting and monitoring processes was promptly set up by the Quality Assurance Manager (QAM) and provided to MedDMO partners, ensuring that all activities of the MedDMO project are followed through orderly and within the scheduled timelines, maintaining the agreed quality standards. The risk management plan was produced on the basis of existing risk management practices aiming at reporting risk identification, analysis and mitigation strategies for the project. During the first year, no update has been made on the set of potential risks along with their corresponding risk-mitigation measures as presented in the DoA and also included in the Workplan. Substantially no risk has materialised so far. Furthermore, the project Data Management Plan (DMP), which is included in D1.1, aims at defining the management strategy of all data within MedDMO, and describes all activities and procedures to ensure that all data is FAIR, following the template and approach recommended by the EC. In the DMP several types of datasets expected to be used, collected or generated were foreseen, while a template was composed to gather information from all partners regarding the datasets they can foresee being necessary for their work in the project. An initial list including information on all datasets that were foreseen in the initial stage the project is also part of D1.1. The DMP also included our approach on ethics related issues. During the first year of the project we promptly deal with any issue required ethical clearance. More specifically for the ongoing online survey in T3.3 ethical authorisation was acquired by the AUTH ethics committee.

Additionally, the 'MedDMO Workplan.xlsx' providing summarised info on Action points, Deliverables, Milestones, Risks, Key results and KPIs, effort allocation per WP and Task, Management structures and mailing lists, was created and maintained by the QAM while it was made available to MedDMO partners since the beginning of the project.

1.2.2 WP2 - Setup of the Mediterranean Hub MedDMO (CERTH, M1-30)

Activities: WP2 deals with the establishment of MedDMO hub, which involved the following activities in the first year of the project:

1) Initiation of the recruitment process for engaging potential community members.

2) Integration with EDMO and the hubs community,

3) Collaboration with EDMO and EDMO hubs.

4) Setting up and making available multimedia analysis tools.

Main achievements: Throughout the first year of our project, we accomplished the following within the scope of WP2:

1) Contacted 65 potential community members receiving 49 positive responses for collaboration.

2) Defined nine collaborative categories in which community members can contribute by offering their knowledge and expertise.

3) Setup the MedDMO collaboration environment within the Truly Media platform.

4) Integrated the Multimedia Forensics Toolbox into the Media Asset Annotation and Management (MAAM) platform.

5) Published the Deepfake knowledge base on the website.

6) Actively participated in several EDMO events and EDMO working groups.

T2.1 Community Building (AUTH)

The aim of T2.1 is to establish a multidisciplinary community in Greece, Cyprus, and Malta, with a focus on countering disinformation. To this direction, the rise of online disinformation as a significant threat to democracy was initially contextualised, emphasising the erosion of trust in media ecosystems and official institutions. Furthermore, customised and translated recruitment material was utilised, ensuring effective communication with potential partners. The engagement process involved a tailored cover letter inviting potential members to join the MedDMO community, emphasising the collective effort required to combat disinformation effectively. A diverse range of partners was contacted, pertaining to both organisations and individuals from various sectors, including journalists, fact-checkers, academics and more. Moreover, the outcomes of the outreach efforts show that the overall response by potential partners was deemed to be very positive, with a very small number of contacts responding negatively or not replying at all. The majority of partners (70,7%) responded positively by accepting the invitation, whereas 23,08% of them were (as of the time of the report) pending, showing great potential when it comes to expanding the number of positive responses. The assessment of results included detailed breakdowns by engagement status, partner type and origin distribution, as well as engagement by contact type and country of origin. Finally, with a forward-looking perspective, attempts focus on the ongoing commitment to building a robust MedDMO community. Nine collaborative categories in which community members can contribute by offering their knowledge and expertise were analysed. At the same time, there is a dedication to extending outreach efforts and engaging new partners to further strengthen the community. The overall 49 positive responses received from the initial 65 contacts served as motivation to persist in the mission against disinformation.

T2.2 Collaboration with EDMO (CERTH)

MedDMO partners have established an active cooperation with EDMO and EDMO hubs by participating in several EDMO events (EDMO 2023 Annual Conference, EDMO hubs meetings) and EDMO working groups ("Research" EDMO Hubs Working Group, "Policy Research and Analysis" EDMO Hubs Working Group, Digital Media Literacy EDMO group), as well as responding promptly to all EDMO surveys. Additionally, the fact-checks of the month (one for each country) are also regularly provided to EDMO and published on the EDMO website.

T2.3 Collaboration environment and verification tools (ATC)

ATC has set up the MedDMO collaboration environment based on the Truly media application, with functionalities and verification tools that help MedDMO researchers carry out their work in a collective manner. Truly Media grants all hub partners access to the Fact-Checks archive of EDMO, which comprises fact-checks from all EDMO hubs. In addition, all MedDMO fact-checks have been ingested into Truly Media from the MedDMO website and are now part of the wider EDMO repository of fact-checks, accessible to all EDMO/Truly Media users. Content exchange with the EDMO archive is seamless, as new fact-checks are continuously imported via RSS. Finally, MedDMO partners can communicate and collaborate with their counterparts from other EDMO hubs through the platform's messaging and social collaboration functionalities.

Additionally, CERTH has set up the Multimedia Forensics Toolbox which has been integrated in the Media Asset Annotation and Management (MAAM) platform. MAAM provides media analysis and annotation services that help users organise media assets, search and retrieve content based on advanced filters and detect potential manipulations in image and video (as described in D2.4). The Multimedia Forensics Toolbox includes the following tools that can greatly assist fact-checkers and researchers in their work against disinformation:

- **Multimedia analysis and automatic annotation**: Any multimedia item that is uploaded to the platform is analysed and annotated with the detected objects and actions. Short textual descriptions are generated and automatic classification into relevant categories, such as memes, disturbing or Not Safe For Work (NSFW) scenes is performed so that users can easily filter such images.
- **Deepfake detection**: Images and videos are analysed to automatically determine whether faces have been manipulated or generated by AI.
- **Image verification assistant**: Images are analysed with 14 image tampering detection algorithms to determine possible forgeries.
- **Location estimation**: Images are analysed to determine the location of the content based on visual similarity to landmarks or visual cues that are tell-tale of a specific region.
- **Advanced search with visual similarity**: Images or videos that bear visual or semantic similarities are automatically identified.

As a whole, MAAM integrated with all the above tools creates a user-friendly interface that provides MedDMO's community with a novel environment to: store and retrieve fact-checked multimedia content, annotate image and video in manual and automatic ways, detect forgeries in image and video, and thus create a large and richly annotated database of multimedia content that can greatly assist in the work against disinformation. We have to mention that a fact-checked multimedia dataset including media content that has already been identified as deepfake or has been used in fact-checks by the fact-checkers of MedDMO, has been assembled and integrated to the MedDMO workspace in the MAAM platform.

Furthermore, the Deepfake Knowledge Base addressing different aspects, such as what deepfakes are, how they are generated, including tips on how to spot deepfakes, has been created. The Deepfake Knowledge base constitutes an educational guide about deepfakes for all kinds of audiences and is available on our website.

1.2.3 WP3 - Disinformation detection and research (AFP, M4-30)

Activities: Activities: WP3 represents one of the key activities of the hub and goes to the heart of what MedDMO aims to achieve, which is raising public awareness about disinformation. The fact-checking partners consisting of AFP, Ellinika Hoaxes, Times of Malta and more recently Cyprus University of Technology, work together to ensure a steady flow of fact checks in English and Greek on subjects that concern the three countries. AFP coordinates this activity, publishing fact checks on an almost daily basis and making sure we don't publish the same fact check from different partners.WP3 involved the following activities in the first year of the project:

1) Detection, fact-checking and disclosure of disinformation content

2) Initial study for the detection and analysis of disinformation campaigns

3) Initial study for the assessment of the impact of disinformation campaigns

Main achievements: Throughout the first year of our project, we accomplished the following within the scope of WP3:

1) Published 366 fact-checks by mid-December 2023, covering various themes related to the environment, politics, economy, technology, health, science and society in both Greek and English.
2) Added separate categories on the website for fact-checks that generate a considerable amount of disinformation such as Covid-19, the war in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war – subjects.
3) Established a common framework and specific methodology across the three partner countries through which a series of disinformation campaigns will be analysed.

4) Initiated an online survey to identify features of disinformation campaigns that make them especially effective as well as audiences that are most susceptible to disinformation.

T3.1 Detection, fact-checking and disclosure of disinformation content (AFP)

The goal is to publish fact-checks in English and Greek on subjects of interest to the public in the three countries concerned. Some 900 fact-checks are to be provided by the fact-check partners – Agence France-Presse, Ellinika Hoaxes and Times of Malta – in Greek and English for the duration of the project. By mid-December 2023, 366 fact-checks had been published by the partners. Cyprus University of Technology in recent months has also been providing fact-checks on issues concerning Cyprus and a total of 16 such fact-checks from CUT were published by mid-December. AFP has provided 123 fact checks in Greek and 25 in English. Ellinika Hoaxes has provided 127 fact checks and Times of Malta has provided 75. We started publishing the fact checks once the website was up and running in March 2023. Times of Malta is running a little behind in terms of numbers because of lack of resources. However they are expected to make up for this in the coming year as more fact-checkers will join their team. The fact-checks cover various themes related to the environment, politics, economy, technology, health, science and society. Separate categories were also added on the website for fact- checks concerning Covid-19, the war in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war – subjects that generate a considerable amount of disinformation. Going forward, we will be putting special focus on the European Parliament elections in June 2024 and will create a special category on that if warranted.

T3.2 Analyse campaign dynamics (ToM)

The goal of T3.2 is to create a common framework across the three partner countries through which to analyse a series of disinformation campaigns, as well as to analyse a total of 30 campaigns across the three partner countries.

Initially, an informal systematic review of several other frameworks used to analyse disinformation campaigns was carried out in order to understand which elements of the various frameworks would be most suited to this project. This led to a first draft of the framework which was presented to all relevant project partners and discussed across the consortium. Following an iterative process and several rounds of feedback from all project partners, the parameters of the framework and methodology were finalised.

This framework intends to capture several key characteristics of disinformation campaigns, including the methods and platforms through which misinformation and disinformation are shared, the techniques and tools used to share misinformation, and the breadth of the campaign, amongst other things. Furthermore, a list of ten broad themes which are likely to be common targets of misinformation across all partner countries was drawn up, ranging from the Russia/Ukraine war, the Israel/Hamas war, the upcoming EP elections, and the pandemic and related health issues.

Now that the framework has been established and agreed upon, the analysis of the campaigns is currently underway within each partner country.

T3.3 Impact assessment of disinformation campaigns on society and democratic processes (AUTH)

T3.3 focuses on the impact assessment of disinformation campaigns on society and democratic processes. It aims to identify media literacy needs and specific disinformation impact in Greece, Cyprus, and Malta. It investigates the reception of disinformation campaigns from both a supply (content) and demand (audience characteristics and interpretive practices) perspective, taking into account the cultural, political and media contexts of the three countries, and how the latter shape people's relation with disinformation and democratic engagement in the public sphere. To this direction the Task utilises both quantitative and qualitative methods. Initially, a

questionnaire was designed, created and finalised, taking into account the comments of all partners. The questionnaire aimed to identify which features of disinformation campaigns make them especially effective and which parts of the MedDMO audience are most susceptible to disinformation. For this reason, it contained a wide range of specific questions regarding participants' news consumption and dissemination interests, demographics and online survey-embedded experiments. Then, the pilot survey was conducted. Afterwards, the basic online survey has been initiated, taking into account all factors that will ensure representativeness of the sample. The questionnaire is currently being disseminated by all partners. At the same time, the qualitative part of the research is being planned, in line with T3.2, T4.1 and 4.2.

1.2.4 WP4 - Media Literacy activities (UCY, M1-30)

Activities:

WP4 deals with the organisation and coordination of media literacy activities throughout the entire duration of the project, involving the following activities:

1) Preparation of training material
2) Organisation of media literacy campaigns
3) Training of Fact-checkers

Main achievements:

Throughout the first year of our project, the following achievements were accomplished within the scope of WP4:

1) Media literacy and educational content in electronic format have been created by MedDMO partners (e.g. videos, presentations, educational guides, tools descriptions).
2) Implementation of a general survey and creation of a questionnaire to identify media literacy needs in the three countries.
3) Development of a proposed plan for our media literacy campaigns to be conducted throughout the second year of our project.
4) Preliminary training plans with proposed structure, learning paths, and indicative content assets were created and exchanged among the involved partners.
5) Several media literacy activities were conducted by MedDMO partners, focusing on different audiences (e.g., high school students, library staff members).
6) Fact-checking and digital investigation workshop for journalists and media professionals in Malta.
7) Collaboration with EDMO by participating regularly in the DML EDMO group meetings and a series of other media literacy workshops/initiatives organised by EDMO.

T4.1 Prepare training material (UCY)

The goal of this task is to deal with the preparation of all necessary educational and training materials to support media literacy events organised in all three participating countries. The objective is to produce materials for different categories of audiences (journalism students, journalists and the general public) in electronic format concerning disinformation and media literacy. In the first year of the project, the following activities were accomplished: after initial research and discussions with partners, a first set of educational materials was completed. Specifically, this set includes a number of short and easy-to-understand video tutorials in Greek and English produced by AFP (six in total), targeting the general public to empower them with basic fact-checking techniques. It also comprises explanatory and training exercises for relevant tools and technologies, such as the use of metadata in content verification, advanced web search, reverse image and video search, and geolocation.

Additionally, the Deepfake Knowledge Base, an educational guide about deepfakes was developed. All the aforementioned content is publicly available on the MedDMO's website. In the context of T4.1, several presentations have also been created, including media literacy content that was demonstrated in media literacy events. Finally, a subsection referring to MedDMO's Multimedia analysis tools for countering Disinformation has been added to outline the set of different tools made available to MedDMO fact-checkers, assisting them in their daily work of detecting and countering disinformation. Detailed descriptions with representative examples have been published on the website including MAAM tools, Verification plug in and Truly Media.

It should be noted that, in line with T3.3, a general online survey using an online questionnaire is in progress to identify gaps and specific media literacy needs, as well as the impact of disinformation in the three countries. These findings will contribute to the overall preparation of training and educational materials, which will be completed during the second year of the project. Lastly, in the context of this task, collaboration with EDMO is of great importance. MedDMO participates regularly in the DML EDMO group meetings and a series of other media literacy workshops organised by EDMO. This participation allows MedDMO to communicate with other hubs, share and gather ideas on training materials or activities. In this context, MedDMO contributed to the preparation of the EDMOeu media literacy repositories list by adding known repositories and media literacy initiatives in the three countries, Cyprus, Greece, and Malta.

T4.2 Organise media literacy campaigns (AUTH)

The aim of T4.2 is the organisation of media literacy campaigns, targeting different parts of the audience. Following the identification of media literacy needs in Greece, Cyprus and Malta (T3.3) and utilising the produced training material (T4.1), both physical and online activities focusing on media literacy will be held in T4.2. At this end, AUTH has presented the proposed plan and discussed it with all the involved partners, initiating the design of the campaigns. Specifically, the media literacy target audiences (e.g., general audience, journalists, etc.), the learning goals, the types of intervention material (e.g., seminars, serious games, quizzes, workshops, etc.) and the potential structure of the training events have been proposed. The ultimate goal was to customise the training procedures to the personalised needs of each specific group, attracting audiences and keeping their engagement unimpaired, thus propelling multidisciplinary cooperation and fostering critical thinking. Among others, much attention was paid to offering impact assessment insights with pre- and post-training activities. In this direction, training plans with the proposed structure, learning paths, and indicative content assets were created and exchanged among the involved partners, followed by an online meeting to explore all the opportunities for the most effective use of the training material during the media literacy campaigns. The first media literacy campaign has already been conducted by CERTH. In this campaign seven presentations were conducted in different schools (mostly through webinars but also with physical presence), with a total of 168 high school students aged 12 to 17 participating. The goal of this campaign was to raise awareness and inform the audience about the impact of disinformation, provide information about the various types/definitions of disinformation, inform the audience about policies and efforts aimed at countering disinformation and explain how to detect and build resilience against disinformation

T4.3 Train the Fact-checkers (AFP)

AFP in late October 2023 organised – with the help of Times of Malta and the University of Malta – a two-day workshop in Malta on countering disinformation. Twelve people joined the workshop, the majority of them journalists from Malta. There were also a few academics and a digital investigation journalist from Greece. The first day dealt with how to spot disinformation, what is fact-checking, search operators on social media, archiving and metadata. The second day dealt with reverse image search, reverse video search, geolocation and the challenges posed by AI. The workshop was a big success and all participants gave it a thumbs up. Further sessions are expected to be held online in the coming months in order to expand on the themes that were discussed and to help participants deal with any issues/obstacles they have encountered. Some of the participants said they

would be interested in sessions concerning disinformation on health and climate as well as on how to improve their writing skills.

1.2.5 WP5 - Monitor media ecosystem (CUT, M7-30)

Activities: WP5 deals with the support of the national authorities for monitoring the platform practices and the whole media ecosystems in the three countries, involving the following activities:

1) Establishing methodology and first steps towards monitoring platform practices for adhering to the CoP.
2) Initiating communication with the authorities to introduce MedDMO as an initiative aimed at providing support to them and first steps towards supporting these authorities
3) Establishing a methodology for monitoring media plurality and publishing of the first annual report

Main achievements:

1) Results from the following activities will be reported in the first annual report of platform practices and national authorities support in February 2024 (as part of the Deliverable 5.1. Report of platform practices and national authorities support):
   a) Analysis of the second reports delivered by CoP Signatories META, TikTok and Google (VLOPS and VLOSES).
   b) Investigation of MedDMO partners' fact-checking organisations collaborations with platforms in combating disinformation
   c) Investigation of Cyprus, Malta, Greece policies and regulations against disinformation
   d) Methodology to analyse the misinformation spread through social media platforms in the three countries based on MedDMO fact-checks
2) Two research papers for disinformation detection ("Detecting misinformation on YouTube" and "HyperGraphDis: Leveraging Hypergraphs for Contextual and Social-Based Disinformation Detection")
3) Establishing collaboration with the three countries national media authorities
4) Supporting the Greek authority after their requests
5) Inform Cyprus and Malta authorities about disinformation related activities (ERGA requests and task forces)
6) Methodology to prepare the plurality report
7) Comprehensive review, data collection, and analysis of resources to assess the plurality and diversity of news media ecosystems in 2022 across three countries and publication of the first annual Media Plurality Report (as part of Deliverable 5.2.)

T5.1 Monitor platforms practices (CUT)

In analysing the practices of online platforms, our focus extended beyond generic evaluations to include a detailed analysis of Signatories' reports and the reported numbers (SLIs) for Cyprus, Malta, and Greece. Complementary to this analysis, we actively participated in the Kantar Public monitoring exercise, utilising the provided tool to evaluate the compliance of signatories with the Code of Practice (CoP). This tool comprised tailored questions aimed at media experts to assess specific CoP measurements and commitments. During the piloting phase of the tool the EDMO hubs and ERGA members (national authorities) were asked to respond to these questions. The assessment primarily targeted Very Large Online Platforms and Very Large Online Social Networks (VLOPs & VLOSEs), encompassing major platforms like META (Facebook, Instagram), Google (YouTube, Ads, Search), Microsoft (LinkedIn), TikTok, and X (prior Twitter). This structured approach sought to comprehensively evaluate major online platforms' adherence to CoP commitments. Our contribution to the exercise included responding to Member-state level tailored questions for Cyprus and Malta, and supporting the NCRTV-Greek authority in addressing questions for Greece. This involved a thorough examination of Signatories' CoP No.2 reports, leveraging the expertise of media professionals to provide nuanced responses. The results of

this exercise for the three countries, coupled with additional insights and limitations regarding Signatories' actions and mechanisms towards CoP compliance, will be detailed in the preparation of Deliverable 5.1.

In addition to our analysis of online platform practices, our commitment to understanding and combating disinformation has been multi-faceted. We initiated a questionnaire to get insights into the collaboration between Fact-checking organisations, specifically MedDMO partners (Hellinika Hoaxes and AFP), and social media platforms in their joint efforts against disinformation. The results of this questionnaire will be integral to the preparation of Deliverable 5.1. Furthermore, we actively participated in an EDMO EU-member state survey on policies against disinformation. We responded to the related questionnaire on behalf of the three countries. The summarised policies per country will be incorporated into Deliverable 5.1. Ethical clearance was secured from the authorities in Cyprus, enabling the progression of our applications to access the data repositories of key platforms, META and X, dedicated to researchers. Additionally, we devised a methodology to identify platforms utilised for spreading disinformation in the context of fact-checked content by MedDMO in the three countries. The outcomes of this investigation will be comprehensively reported in Deliverable 5.1. Lastly, our engagement with academic research on disinformation, exemplified by exploring methods such as those outlined in "Detecting misinformation on YouTube" (https://arxiv.org/abs/2307.12155) and “HyperGraphDis: Leveraging Hypergraphs for Contextual and Social-Based Disinformation Detection” (https://arxiv.org/abs/2310.01113) , underscores our commitment to staying at the forefront of disinformation detection strategies.

T5.2 Support national authorities (CUT)

In the initial phase of supporting broadcasting authorities in Cyprus, Greece, and Malta, MedDMO presented its objectives and activities within the broader EDMO initiative. The proposal aimed to establish collaborative partnerships with these authorities to counter disinformation at national and European levels. Positive responses were received from the Cyprus Radio and Television Authority (CRTA), the National Council for Radio Television Authority (NCRTV) in Greece, and the Malta Broadcasting Authority (MBA). The collaboration focuses on organising awareness webinars, disseminating media literacy materials, conducting on-demand surveys, and sharing information, including results from monitoring platforms and fact-checking initiatives.

In support of the NCRTV, the Greek Media Authority, MedDMO actively participated in the Monitoring the Code of Practice (CoP) exercise led by Kantar Public. This initiative aimed to develop a tool for evaluating CoP signatories' reports. Following the authority's outreach, MedDMO's WP5 team collaborated closely to facilitate the exercise, extending the necessary support. A similar offer was extended to the Cypriot authority - CRTA and Maltese authority MBA. CRTA acknowledged awareness of the exercise but expressed non-involvement while MBA did not give a timely response. However, MedDMO participated in the exercise to give input on behalf of the two countries (Cyprus and Malta). Moreover, NCRTV engaged with MedDMO by sharing ERGA's request to gather disinformation campaigns related to the Middle East Conflict across EU member states. MedDMO responded by providing weekly fact-checked content in Greek for Greece and Cyprus. This curated information was then shared with the Cyprus authority, CRTA, to assist in fulfilling ERGA's request for reporting on disinformation campaigns.

In terms of collaboration with CRTA - the Cyprus Authority, MedDMO's partnership was officially communicated through various channels. To further amplify this collaboration, plans are in place for a press coverage event during the upcoming MedDMO plenary meeting in Limassol, Cyprus, scheduled for March 2024. This event will serve as a platform to introduce the MedDMO project and emphasise the ongoing collaboration with CRTA. Similar initiatives are also being planned for the introduction of MedDMO and collaboration fostering with authorities in Greece and Malta.

T5.3 Monitor media plurality (UCY)

During the first year of the project, the first annual media plurality report was created. The report is the outcome of a comprehensive review, data collection, and analysis of resources focused on the plurality and diversity of news media ecosystems in 2022 in the three countries within the Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory (MedDMO) Hub. It is based on the annual Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM), International Press Institute, European Centre for Press, Media and Freedom and national/local reports, incorporating advice and suggestions from community members as well as data from various valuable sources and scientific publications.

The report examines the media landscapes in these countries, exploring three key dimensions for each: a) media market characteristics and general information, b) the level of fundamental protection and market plurality within their media environments, and c) the extent of political independence and social inclusiveness observed in their media systems. By analysing these aspects, the report aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the media dynamics in these countries. The conclusions drawn from the analysis shed light on the current state of media in Cyprus, Greece, and Malta, highlighting both similarities and differences across the overall media landscape in the three countries.

1.2.6 WP6 - Communication and sustainability activities (ATC, M1-30)

Activities: Under WP6, ATC has undertaken the following activities during the first year of the project:

1) Creation of the hub's bilingual website.
2) Drafting of the Communication plan, which will be updated twice during the course of the project.

Main achievements:

1) By the end of M3 of the project, ATC had set-up a bilingual (Greek & English) website, based on an open-source WordPress platform. The website serves mainly as a communication and dissemination tool for MedDMO but is also a useful resource for disinformation debunking, which would interest the wider audience in Greece, Cyprus and Malta. Our web portal publishes all fact-checks provided by MedDMO partners, as well as News & Events posts, Media literacy material (Tools, Tutorials and Resources) and Research & Studies articles. Users can read more about the methodology and activities of MedDMO as well as view the members' profiles. If they wish to report incidents of disinformation, the MedDMO website has a functionality allowing them to report their concerns and our fact-checking experts will further investigate the suspected incidents.
2) ATC has drafted a communication plan, which will allow the project partners to better communicate and disseminate the project's activities to MedDMO's audiences. This plan will be updated again in M15 of the project.

T6.1 Communication plan and activities (ATC)

The first iteration of the Communication plan and activities has been drafted during the project's first year. The plan will be used as a reference document for the coordinator and the partners with the goal of communicating and effectively disseminating the project's activities to various stakeholders and audiences. The deliverable provides detailed information about the Dissemination and Communication Plan of the MedDMO project. It focuses on engaging stakeholders to maximise knowledge of the project's results and raise awareness about disinformation campaigns in Greek, Cypriot, and Maltese society. The plan includes a strategy tailored to key stakeholder groups and an impact measurement matrix based on various Key Performance Indicators. The plan builds upon the project's Description of Action and outlines the target audiences, dissemination channels, and activities planned for the project's duration. The inclusion of Key Performance Indicators allows for assessment and evaluation of the project's performance over time. According to the plan, the MedDMO project is now

completing its first 'Awareness' phase, moving on to the second 'Results oriented' phase. An updated version of the plan is expected by month 15 of the project.

T6.2 Sustainability planning and community engagement (ATC)

According to this task, which will culminate in a plan delivered at the end (month 30) of the project, the consortium will collaborate with key members of the community to create a financially realistic and socially acceptable plan for the future sustainability of MedDMO. The plan will consider potential paid services for training and investigative research for third parties. The community will be involved in the development of the plan and will be encouraged to support and implement it towards the end of the project.

1.2.7 KPIs

In this section a summary of the achieved KPIs during the first year are presented.

Key Results	Description	Performance Indicator	Target	Target value	Current value	KPI LEADER
KR1	Create a multinational EDMO hub for Greece, Cyprus and Malta. (web collaboration environment for the members of the hub, a public informational website and a communication campaign at multinational level)	Develop a public informational website	Website delivered	TRUE	TRUE	ATC
		Develop a web collaboration platform	Web collaboration platform delivered	TRUE	TRUE	
		KPIs for MedDMO website	10.000 or more page views per month	10.000/month	3.456/month	
			2.000 or more visits per month	2000/month	667/month	
			2 min or more average visit duration	2min/visit	1min 12 sec/visit	
			30% or more returning visits	>= 600/month	144/month, 21%	
			500 Number of reads for fact-checks per month	500/month	302/month	
			500 Number of reads for media literacy material per month	500/month	287/month	
		KPIs for Facebook channel	20 or more posts per month	20/month	TRUE	
			300 or more followers in year 1	300	400	
			min 100% Follower growth (year on year)	100%/year	N/A	
			80% or more Shares	16/month	TRUE	
			At least 50 Likes in average per post	50/post	50/post	

Key Results	Description	Performance Indicator	Target	Target value	Current value	KPI LEADER
KR1	Create a multinational EDMO hub for Greece, Cyprus and Malta. (web collaboration environment for the members of the hub, a public informational website and a communication campaign at multinational level)	KPIs for Twitter channel	20 or more Tweets per month	20/month	11/month	ATC
			500 or more followers in year 1	500	300	
			min 100% Follower growth (year on year)	100%/year	N/A	
			50% or more Retweets	10/month	TRUE	
			15 or more Mentions per month	15/month	1/month	
			40% or more liked tweets	8/month	TRUE	
		Other KPIs include the following: we plan for a minimum of	10 presentations to be submitted to SlideShare	10	3	
			10 presentations at events (conferences, workshops, industry gatherings)	10	13	
			5 publications in scientific journals	5	0	
			2 workshops, (co)organised by MedDMO	2	1	

Key Results	Description	Performance Indicator	Target	Target value	Current value	KPI LEADER
KR2	Create a multinational and multidisciplinary community (at least 40 members)	Participating members	at least 40 members	40	49	AUTH
KR3	Integrate the hub with the central EDMO project, in cooperation with EDMO's Executive Board (MedDMO will be operating on the same collaboration platform (Truly Media)	Develop a web collaboration platform	Web collaboration platform delivered	TRUE	TRUE	ATC
		EDMO contribution report delivered	Report delivered	TRUE	N/A	CERTH
KR4	Ensure the production of a continuous flow of fact-checks to be contributed to the EDMO's repository. AFP will provide around 10 in Greek covering Greece and Cyprus and 2 in English. The English ones would cover Cyprus-related stories and the most important stories of the month in English for the Maltese readers). EH will provide around 10 per month in Greek, and the Times of Malta will provide around 8 per month in English	Number of fact-checks published through the MedDMO website	30 fact checks per month	30/month M12: 360	366	AFP
KR5	Provide at least 30 analytical reports on specific disinformation campaigns and/or studies linked to relevant disinformation phenomena also assessing their impact in Greece, Cyprus, and Malta	Number of analytical reports on specific disinformation campaigns	30 analytical reports	30	N/A	EH
		Number of impact assessment reports on specific disinformation campaigns – will be included in the final report	Report delivered	- TRUE	N/A	AUTH

Key Results	Description	Performance Indicator	Target	Target value	Current value	KPI LEADER
KR6	Provide at least 15 media literacy campaigns or events at national/multi-national level to increase citizens' awareness and societal resilience	Number of media literacy campaigns or events at national/multi-national level	15 media literacy campaigns/	15	1	UCY
			2 ML events have been organised until M18	2	1	
KR7	Empower the fact checkers and establish ground rules and common fact-checking methodology, through training sessions. Among these, a thorough Fact-checking training session for professionals in Malta and several webinars on the usage of advanced verification tools	Number of people participating in training sessions	train 3 journalists from the Times of Malta	3	TRUE	AFP
			train 3 journalists from Cyprus (and/or Greece)	3	TRUE	
KR8	Support provided to national authorities in their efforts to monitor the policies put in place by online platforms to limit the impact of disinformation	Support provided to monitor the policies of online platforms to limit disinformation	Report delivered	TRUE	N/A	CUT
KR9	Monitor platform practices affecting Greece, Cyprus, and Malta	Support provided to monitor the policies of online platforms to limit disinformation	Report delivered	TRUE	N/A	CUT
KR10	Monitor media plurality in Greece, Cyprus, and Malta.	Media Plurality Report delivered	3 Reports delivered	3	1	UCY

Key Results	Description	Performance Indicator	Target	Target value	Current value	KPI LEADER
KR11	Cooperate with and contribute to EDMO and other national/multinational hubs	Material (fact-checks, media literacy content, etc) contributed to EDMO - Cooperation with other national/multinational hubs	Report delivered	TRUE	N/A	CERTH
KR12	Promote actions to secure additional funds and support to preserve the independence of the hub	Sustainability plan delivered	Plan delivered	TRUE -	N/A	ATC

1.3 Impact

No deviations from the impact described in section 3 of the DoA.

1.4 Update of the plan for exploitation and dissemination of results

We have been fairly satisfied with the exploitation and dissemination strategy we follow so far. The social media reach we have achieved on Facebook, both in terms of followers and of their engagement, is deemed satisfactory. The ad campaign that we run did extremely well, which serves as a reassurance that if we need more exposure in the future, this platform will give us targeted success. On the flipside, we didn't enjoy similar success with X. Maybe that's due to an overall EDMO's scaling back from the platform. To offset this, we created an account on Instagram, by the end of the first year of MedDMO. We expect to see a significant rise in engagement in IG throughout the second year of the project, while at the same time initiating our presence in LinkedIn.

2 Follow-up of recommendations and comments from previous review(s)

Not applicable

3 Exploitation primarily in non-associated third countries

Not applicable

4 Open science

Open Science Research approaches were adopted since the beginning of the project. During the activities of WP4 to collect media literacy needs, we actively involved a variety of relevant stakeholders through the end-user survey. In addition, under our research on media plurality in our region, official data from established sources (EUI observatory of media plurality) were analysed and our findings were again publicly published, as we intend to do with all our research results. All educational and informational material we produce is made publicly available through our website, under the sections of 'Media Literacy' and 'Research & Studies'. Fact-checks that are produced are publicly posted under our 'Fact-checking' section and promoted through all our social media channels. The same we intend to do with the analyses of disinformation campaigns as well as the studies on the impact of disinformation in the three countries we represent.

5 Deviations from Annex 1 and Annex 2

Below we list and justify the deviations from the DoA, the associated consequences and the proposed corrective actions.

5.1 Tasks/objectives

Throughout the initial project year, work across all tasks proceeded smoothly. Partners' descriptions below provide insights into specific positive or negative deviations in certain tasks or objectives.

CERTH: No deviation concerning specific Tasks/objectives.

ATC: In June 2023, ATC set-up an Instagram account for MedDMO, in addition to Facebook and X (although it was not foreseen in the original Communication Plan and Activities).

UCY: No deviation concerning specific Tasks/objectives.

CUT: In May 2023, the Cyprus University of Technology started contributing to WP3 by publishing fact-checks focusing on disinformation in Cyprus (although it was not foreseen in the DoA).

AUTH: No deviation concerning specific Tasks/objectives.

ToM: A deviation in task 3.1 can be noted, namely in terms of the number of fact-checks published throughout the year, which were less than foreseen. Much of this can be attributed to the process of setting up the fact-checking unit within the Times of Malta (with a fact-checker only being successfully engaged after the project had already started) and establishing a suitable workflow through which to allocate the necessary resources to this task. As the year progressed, this was partly rectified, with the publication of fact-checks aligning more closely with the planned number.

UoM: No deviation concerning specific Tasks/objectives.

EH: EH has actively maintained an active presence on the MedDMO Instagram account since its inception, regularly posting and sharing MedDMO fact-checks and relevant content (although it was not foreseen in the DoA).

AFP: No deviation concerning specific Tasks/objectives.

5.2 Use of resources

MedDMO partners, on average, spent approximately 101.26% of the planned effort. This 1.26% overspending of the planned effort reflects a reasonable and minor deviation. Upon closer examination of the MedDMO consumed effort per work package (WP), specific deviations are detailed and justified below. There is an overall significant overspending effort in WP3, stemming from AFP's consumed effort in T3.1. On the other hand, there is a slight underspending in all other WPs, resulting in a balanced average effort consumption among MedDMO partners. More detailed information on the deviations per Work Package and partner are provided in the following, after describing our methodology for estimating the planned use of resources.

Planned use of resources

To compute the planned use of resources we first calculate for every task its active duration over its whole duration within the period under question and then multiply this by the total foreseen effort for this task in the whole duration of the project. So, for example, T5.2 was active for 6 months in the first year and its whole duration is 24 months. The foreseen allocated effort for the task during the whole project is 17 Person Months, so we estimate its planned effort for Year 1 as 17 multiplied by 6/24, which is 4.25 PMs. The same methodology was applied to calculate the planned effort per Task, per partner. The planned effort per WP per partner is calculated as the sum of the planned effort per partner, per task for the tasks incorporated in each WP.

Deviations per Work Package

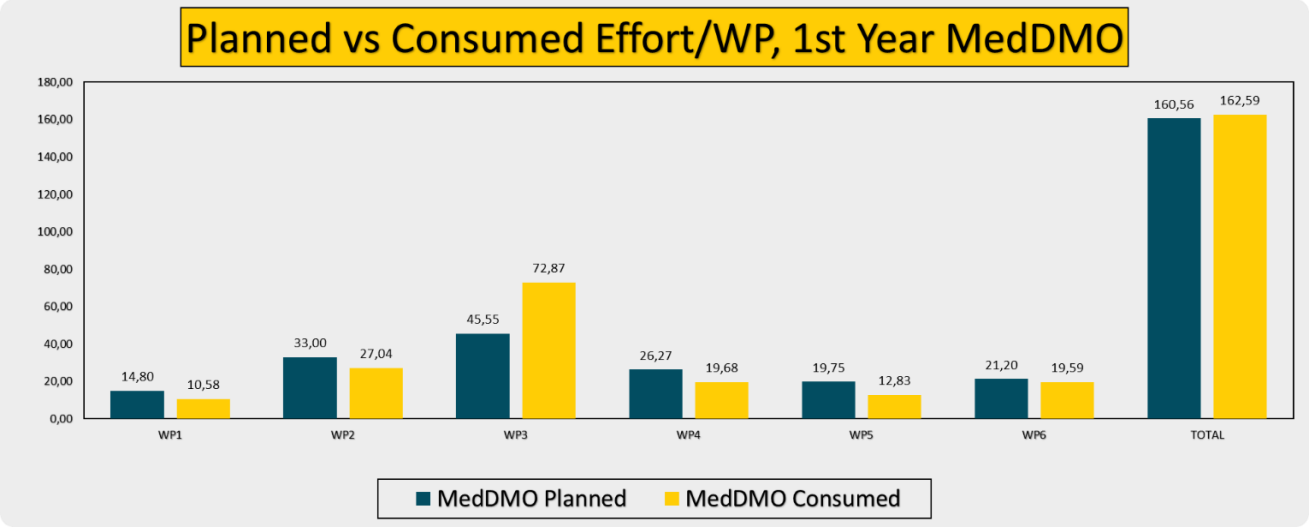

Figure 1: Planned vs Consumed use of resources per WP

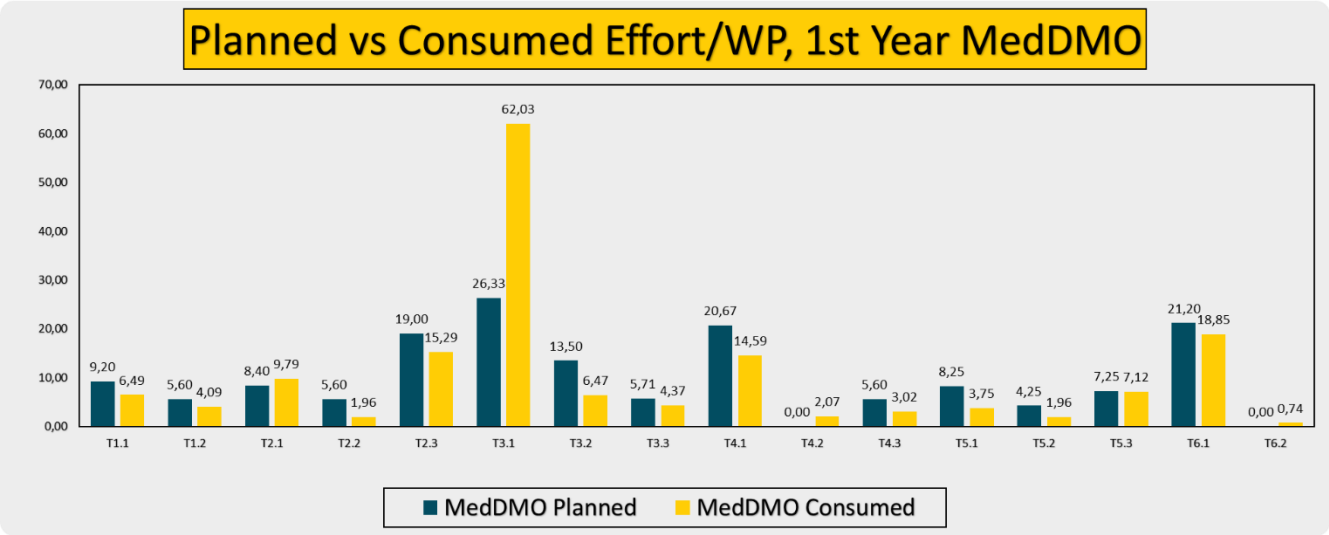

Figure 2: Planned vs Consumed use of resources per WP

Compared to the planned use of resources, we note the following deviations:

- **WP1 consumed approx. 71% of the planned effort for year 1.** Lower effort spent on task T1.1-T1.2 mainly from CERTH due to administrative delays in the beginning of the project in recruiting new personnel. We have to mention that this deviation, as can be seen from the respective task descriptions, didn't affect our positive progress in WP1. More effort is foreseen to be consumed in the next period to alleviate this discrepancy.
- **WP2 consumed approx. 82% of the planned effort for year 1**. A slight overspending in T2.1 is attributed to AUTH, which consumed more effort than planned, considering that D2.1 had to be delivered in M12. Furthermore, the overall underspending in WP2 is due to lower consumed effort in T2.2 and T2.3 primarily from CERTH and ATC respectively. CERTH consumed their planned effort in T2.3 in order to provide D2.4 and make the Multimedia Forensics Toolbox and the Deepfake knowledge base available on time, consuming less in T2.2, while ATC consumed less in T2.3 concerning the Collaboration Platform despite the fact that it has been set up. CERTH will consume more effort the coming year in T2.2 while it is also foreseen from ATC to spend more effort in the Collaboration platform the next period.
- **WP3 consumed approx. 160% of the planned effort for year 1.** This significant overspending in WP3 is primarily associated with AFP's additional effort in T3.1 due to devoting more local resources (of lower rate) on fact-checks, which as later explained, was deemed necessary but does not impact the planned budget. Moreover EH and ToM have also contributed to this overspending as mentioned and justified in their descriptions. The underspending in T3.2 is due to the fact that the process was still in the methodology design phase, and is expected to catch up entering the operational stage. ToM had to spend more in T3.1 in order to streamline the fact-checking operation from scratch.
- **WP4 consumed approx. 75% of the planned effort for year 1.** The underspending in WP4 is attributed to slight underspending from several involved partners in T4.1. This discrepancy was somehow foreseen, as more effort on preparing training material will be consumed in the forthcoming period, having also reached a level of identification for media literacy needs through the feedback gathered from the ongoing online survey in T3.3. Concerning T4.2, several partners, such as AUTH, UCY and CERTH have consumed some minor effort despite the fact that the Task initiates in M13. This is due to preliminary work that had to be carried out from AUTH and UCY, while CERTH was engaged in the first media literacy campaign. This discrepancy will be alleviated in the course of the project since less effort will be consumed, considering that initial work has already been made.

- **WP5 consumed approx. 65% of the planned effort for year 1.** The underspending in WP4 is primarily attributed to lower consumed effort from CUT in T5.1 and T5.2 and is justified as insufficient personnel was recruited in the initial phase of these Tasks due to time consuming administrative procedures. More effort will be consumed the forthcoming period.
- **WP6 consumed approx. 92% of the planned effort for year 1.** The consumed effort almost aligns with the plan. Minor deviations mainly from CERTH underspending in T6.1 will be alleviated in the course of the project. A slight overspending of ATC in T6.2 indicates some preliminary work carried out for the exploitation plan and will be rectified in the forthcoming period.

Deviations per partner

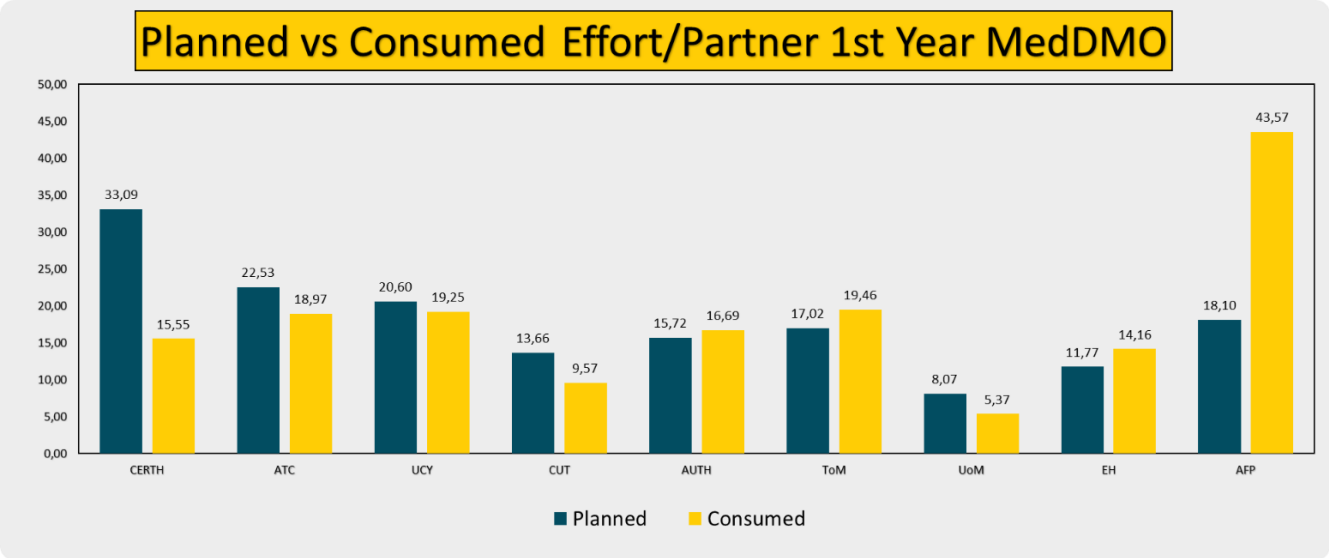

Figure 3: planned vs consumed use of resources per Partner.

CERTH: Significant underspending in most of the tasks is due to administrative delays in the beginning of the project in hiring and establishing the necessary contracts with new personnel. These delays could not be avoided as CERTH, being an organisation under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Development, has to follow particular procedures for recruiting and contracting, which can be initiated only when the project contract has been signed by the EC. This discrepancy in Tasks 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 4.1 and 6.1 will be gradually alleviated in the course of the project as all necessary personnel are now in place. Furthermore, considering that CERTH had to provide D2.4 on M6 and make the Multimedia Forensics Toolbox and the Deepfake knowledge base available on time most of the available resources were allocated to T2.3 consuming the planned effort. Furthermore the consumed effort 0.1 PMs in T4.2 is related with the 1st Media Literacy Campaign conducted by CERTH despite the fact that T4.2 initiates on M13.

ATC: There is a deviation in T2.3 Collaboration environment and verification tools 6,20/10 (-3,8) because the total planned effort for this task (10M) should be spent by the end of the first year. Still, more effort will be allocated in the collaborative platform during the next months; hence this will be resolved. In task 4.3 Train the fact-checkers, a negative deviation will be offset in the coming periods, as ATC is planning to organise training sessions for fact-checking based on Truly Media. T6.1 Communication plan and activities shows more consumed effort but this can be attributed to the increased effort consumed in the initial set-up of communication channels and the drafting of the communication strategy, hence this will also be normalised throughout the course of the project. T6.2 Sustainability planning and community engagement shows less consumed effort but this is expected to be rectified as the main report is scheduled for the end of the project.

UCY: UCY's consumed effort during the first year of the project closely aligns with the planned effort outlined in the DoA across several WPs. Any deviations related to WP3/T3.2 (-1) and WP5/T5.3 (+1,1) can be attributed to a decision to allocate more effort to certain work packages and certain tasks/deliverables (e.g., media plurality report). A slight deviation related to WP4 can be attributed to participation in preliminary and media literacy activities within this WP. Any discrepancies will be addressed and resolved as the project progresses.

CUT: The reason for the deviation in these two tasks (T5.1 Monitor platforms practices and T5.2 Support national authorities) is that they started in month 6 (May 2023), and only 2 people worked on these tasks, while the rest of the team focused more on other packages. Any discrepancies will be addressed and resolved as the project progresses.

AUTH: Regarding the T1.2, in the workplan the deliverable D1.1 ended in M3. This meant that we were able to submit working hours to our Research Committee for this deliverable only until this date. For this reason we have covered all planned effort for this Task. In T2.1, the deliverable D2.1 had to be delivered end in M12. So, we had tried to cover all the hours of the task until M12, although the Task continues until the end of the project. However, after a specific request to the Research Committee in order not to have the same problem as in T1.2, we slowed down the over-consuming of hours and we will be able to balance the consumption till the end of the Task. Slight deviations in WP3 and WP5 are mainly due to administrative delays regarding the process of contract signing. The issue is already being resolved as the project progresses. Finally, although T4.2 starts in M13, we have already declared some working hours since we took part in preliminary activities of the Task. All the above deviations do not impact AUTH's overall budgeting.

ToM: Additional effort was consumed for T3.1, as this also entailed the setting up of the Times of Malta's fact-checking operation from scratch, including establishing the necessary practices, methodologies and guidelines through which the organisation would carry out fact-checking (in line with international fact-checking standards). As a result, there are also minor deviations in tasks 4.1 and 4.3, although these are expected to be rectified as the project progresses.

UoM: The consumed effort is aligned with the planned with only slight deviations which will be resolved during the project lifetime.

EH: The consumed effort is in line with the planned effort with only minor deviations in **T3.2** and **T6.1.,** which will be addressed and resolved as the project progresses.
T3.2 (-0.5) The remaining [0,5] PMs was covered in Dec, 2023, by developing the disinformation analysis framework.
T6.1 (-0.6) More needs to be done to promote MedDMO's communication activities. We have taken on the responsibility of operating MedDMO's instagram account.

T3.1 (+3.8): This deviation, is attributed to the unforeseen armed conflict in the Middle East. To adapt to the evolving demands of information warfare, we had to dedicate additional effort, showcased through our work on MedDMO's page. Any inconsistencies will be attended to and resolved throughout the project's advancement.

AFP: The significant deviation observed in T3.1 (+27,24), is due to increased time that has been found necessary in order to produce fact-checks involving multi-disciplinary personnel (research, investigation, documentation, editing) on top of the journalist fact-check debunking work itself. However, as we mainly use local resources, the person-month cost is much lower than what was budgeted, which allows us to remain within budget boundaries. If necessary we will also involve in-kind contribution, which will allow us to stay in line with the budget.

5.2.1 Unforeseen subcontracting

Not applicable

5.2.2 Unforeseen use of in kind contribution from third party against payment or free of charges

Not applicable



Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory



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