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D3.2

Disinformation campaign report

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Abstract	This annual report summarises online disinformative narratives detected during the project in Cyprus, Greece, and Malta; highlights cross-country patterns; and outlines the applied methodology

Keywords	Disinformation, Misinformation, Disinformation campaigns, Disinformation Narrative Reports, Greece, Cyprus, Malta.

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Glossary

Abbreviation	Meaning
EU	European Union
MedDMO	Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory
EH	Ellinika Hoaxes
UoM	University of Malta
FCC	Fact Check Cyprus
CERTH	Centre for Research and Technology Hellas
EDMO	European Digital Media Observatory
CUT	Cyprus University of Technology
TBP	To be published
DoA	Description of Action

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Executive Summary

This deliverable reports on the work conducted under Work Package 3 (Disinformation Detection and Research – Tasks 3.1 and 3.2), focusing on the identification and analysis of possible disinformation campaigns in Greece, Cyprus, and Malta. It aims to provide an overview of the main disinformation narratives detected in the three countries and analysed through in-depth reports published over the past year.

The deliverable explains the methodology developed and applied by the Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory (MedDMO) Hub to select and analyse these narratives, outlines the total number of reports produced, and summarises the key narratives examined in each country. It also highlights cross-country patterns in terms of narrative themes and the actors involved in their dissemination.

By examining these elements, the deliverable aims to offer insight into the disinformation dynamics in the region and contribute to a broader understanding of the information ecosystems in Greece, Cyprus, and Malta.

1 Introduction

Aiming to paint a full picture of the information landscapes and the expression of the information disorder phenomenon in each of the countries covered by the hub, MedDMO early-on set as one of its priorities the study of disinformation campaigns in the three countries that it covers, looking into specific disinformation narratives, how they spread, who is spreading them, and the national context that enables their cultivation and dissemination. Specifically, the production of at least 30 analytical reports on disinformation narratives and their possible campaign dynamics across the three countries of the hub has been one of MedDMO's key results (KR5 in the DoA), associated with Tasks 3.1 and 3.2.

This deliverable examines the reports produced during the final year of the project. Specifically, it outlines how MedDMO worked to establish a shared framework for report production and presents the outcome of that effort, which guided the development of the reports. It includes a country-by-country analysis of the reports completed by the time of this deliverable's submission (including those not yet officially published), categorized by theme. It also provides contextual factors and country-specific observations related to the dissemination of the narratives, as derived from the reports, and highlights patterns (both similarities and differences) across the disinformation narratives spreading in each country.

This content breakdown also mirrors the structure of the deliverable.

Up until the submission of this report, 27 reports have been produced covering the three countries, indicating a slight deviation from the initially planned outcome. Given that the project was extended by two months, 24 of these reports have already been published, while the remaining 3 are scheduled for publication in the final month of the project (July 2025).

2 Initiation of disinformation narrative reporting and methodology development

To support the drafting of reports analyzing misleading narratives that exhibit the dynamics of potential disinformation campaigns on behalf of MedDMO, a common methodology needed to be developed and consistently followed by all partners.

An early challenge in establishing a common methodology was the differing profiles of the fact-checking organizations involved. While Ellinika Hoaxes (EH) had already been active in the information integrity field for several years, both Times of Malta (ToM) and Fact Check Cyprus (FCC) were only in the process of setting up their respective fact-checking services at the start of MedDMO. This made it more difficult for them to anticipate the nature of the mis/disinformation they would encounter in the years to come.

To achieve the creation of a shared understanding and methodology, a series of online meetings were held with the participation of team leaders from EH, ToM, and the Cyprus University of Technology (CUT)'s recently established FCC focused on facilitating the development of this shared approach.

During this initial phase of work, academic literature related to the detection of disinformation campaign activity was reviewed, along with relevant work produced by other EDMO observatories. Of particular relevance here was a report published by BENEDMO, which explored the workflows adopted by Dutch and Flemish fact-checkers when dealing with disinformation.[1]Based on these discussions, an initial framework was proposed.

Accordingly, and given that the reports were intended to analyze potential disinformation campaigns, it was proposed that they include a set of key elements. These included: the platforms on which the disinformation was disseminated; the actors involved in spreading the narrative(s); the central theme or topic of the campaign; the earliest known local instance of the narrative; its reach (e.g., views, shares, likes); any indications of cross-campaign coordination (such as connections to other disinformation narratives); and the techniques used to disseminate the content, such as the use of AI, manipulated or fabricated images, and other forms of media manipulation.

An early draft of this framework is presented in Table 1, based on the analysis of a specific misleading narrative:

Guiding questions		Specific case (e.g., Al-Ahli hospital bombing)
Platform	Where was the disinformation campaign shared?	Facebook, TikTok
	Has the campaign appeared on multiple platforms?	Yes
Disinformation spreader	Private/public person?	Private
	Anonymous account?	No

[1] BENEDMO Fact-checking User Research and Research Method

	Accounts created deliberately for campaign?	No
Theme/topic	What is the campaign about?	Israel/Hamas war
	Is it linked to a specific incident/event?	Yes
	Does it target a specific person/subject?	No
	What are the key claims?	1) Hamas' misfired rocket hit hospital; 2) IDF tweet took credit for attack; 3) Al Jazeera journalist witnessed Hamas rocket; 4) Recording captures Hamas operatives discussing incident
	Do these claims form part of broader disinformation about the same topic?	Yes
Origin	What is the earliest known trace of the campaign locally?	Facebook posts
	Was it detected earlier across MedDMO hub?	Yes
	Was it detected earlier in other hubs?	Yes
Reach	Views/shares/likes	10.000
	Languages	English; Arabic
Cross-campaign coordination	Links to other disinformation campaigns	Yes
Techniques	Use of AI	No
	Use of manipulated or fabricated photos	No
	Use of manipulated or fabricated audio	Yes
	Use of manipulated or fabricated videos	No
	Use of other techniques	a) Video game footage passed off as real; b) tweet from copycat X account;
Links to related fact-checks		Fact-check: Disinformation about the Gaza hospital bombing (timesofmalta.com)

Table 1: Early draft of the methodology framework suggested for analyzing the disinformation narratives.

After the first draft was evaluated by all team leaders, a more comprehensive and structured framework was developed. For the needs of the report analysis, it was agreed that each report should follow a specific structure, which reflects the methodology used for the analysis: starting with an introduction that provides a brief description of the campaign, including the topics it relates to, the time of detection, and any connection to major events; followed by a section providing critical background context and explaining why the campaign was selected for analysis, such as frequent repetition, relevance to political discourse or debate, intent to cause harm, targeting of minority groups, or use of emerging technologies like deepfakes.

The third section presents a detailed analysis of the key elements outlined in Table 1, including the platforms used, the actors involved, and the techniques employed. The report then concludes with a summary of key findings, followed by a list of fact-checks on which the report was based on.

Ultimately, the first and second drafts were consolidated into a single version, which was adopted as the recommended methodology for all MedDMO member organizations contributing to Task 3.2.

To ensure transparency, the following paragraph, summarizing the methodology used to investigate the misleading narratives examined in the reports, was included on the first page of all reports produced under Task 3.2.

The methodology is presented at the beginning of each report in the following form:

> ***MedDMO's Approach***
> *For this series of publications, the Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory's (MedDMO) fact-checking partners developed a framework with specific criteria for analysing disinformation narratives. In this context, we used the European Digital Media Observatory's (EDMO) definition of disinformation narratives—clear messages derived from a consistent set of contents that can be proven false using fact-checking methodology. Our criteria include examining sets of claims that are demonstrably misleading or false concerning a specific topic and that have emerged within a short period. Furthermore, our objective is to analyse instances where these narratives were crafted by actors or groups with the intention to incite fear, exert influence and control, or harass individuals using social media platforms. When sufficient data on the actors and their objectives is available, we examine whether these instances are part of a disinformation campaign.*

Finally, it should be noted that, depending on the specific narrative and the unique characteristics of each case analyzed as a potential disinformation campaign, participating organizations were given the flexibility to adapt the framework as needed. Adjustments could be made based on the availability of data for each topic and the key findings of each report. As such, the framework was developed as a recommended methodology intended to support and guide partners, rather than as a rigid set of rules.

To effectively compile the data necessary for the reports from each country, sources included not only articles produced and shared with MedDMO by the participating members, but also fact-checks from their fact-checking operations and fact-checks of all active and accredited fact-checking organizations in each country. In total, 446 fact-checking articles were used in the production of all reports.

3 Narratives analysis

This part of the deliverable analyzes the narratives detected and examined in the reports produced for each of the three countries covered by the MedDMO hub. Each country section is structured as follows: an overview of all reports related to that country, a table listing the reports along with their publication dates, a thematic breakdown of the identified narratives, and a set of country-specific observations and contextual factors based on the reports' findings. Within each section, reports are referred to by the number assigned to them in the respective country's table.

The final section of this part of the deliverable highlights some common patterns and differences in the narratives spreading in each country, as well as in the actors promoting them.

In addition to country-specific reports examined below, CERTH produced a separate report[2] based on an analysis of MedDMO fact-checks archive of concerning disinformation that was detected in the run-up to the 2024 EU elections in the three countries covered by MedDMO. The report identified narratives targeting EU institutions, officials, and electoral processes, local narratives tailored to local contexts, as well as certain themes, such as immigration and the Russia-Ukraine war, that transcended national boundaries and reflected shared EU concerns.

3.1 Greece

Overview of Reports

Ten reports concerning mis/disinformation narratives and potential campaigns spreading in Greece were produced under the project (all authored by EH). These reports examined narratives related to immigration, climate denial, anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric, disinformation targeting Ukraine, President Zelensky and his associates, and false claims linked to U.S. politics following Trump's 2025 inauguration. Additionally, misleading narratives circulating in Greece about the 2024 Paris Olympics were analyzed, focusing on topics that dominated public discussion, such as gender issues, religious controversies, and claims related to the Israel–Hamas conflict. Finally, the reports also addressed the issue of social media scams in Greece, as observed from late 2022 to early 2025.

No	Title	Partner	Country	Date
1	Disinformation narrative report around the wildfire in Northern Greece by Ellinika Hoaxes	EH	Greece	25 June 2024

[2] https://meddmo.eu/greece-european-parliament-elections-disinformation-report/

2	Crossing the Lines: How the Far-Right exploited out-of-context videos to spread anti-immigrant rhetoric	EH	Greece	3 September 2024
3	Winds of Misinformation: The Alleged Connection Between Wildfires and Wind Turbines - Similar and Emerging Misconceptions	EH	Greece	4 February 2025
4	False Claims Targeting the LGBTQ+ Community in Greece's 2024 Marriage Equality Discussion	EH	Greece	11 March 2025
5	Pro-Russian Disinformation in Greece: The False Narrative of Ukrainian Officials' Misuse of Western Aid for Lavish Spending	EH	Greece	24 March 2025
6	U.S.-Related Misleading Claims in Greece: Tracking False Narratives Since Trump's 2025 Inauguration	EH	Greece	7 May 2025
7	Tracing the Pro-Russian narrative linking Ukraine with Nazism: The claims fueling the narrative in Greece since 2022	EH	Greece	12 May 2025

8	Misleading Claims Around the 2024 Paris Olympics: A Focus on Greece	EH	Greece	20 May 2025
9	COVID-19 Vaccine Mis/Disinformation in Greece: An Analysis of the Most Prominent Narratives and Actors	EH	Greece	TBP
10	Deepfake scams on Facebook	EH	Greece	TBP

Table 2: Full list of all the disinformation narrative reports published by MedDMO since June 2024 concerning disinformation narratives in Greece

Breakdown of narratives by theme

Narratives targeting marginalized communities

In the summer of 2023, anti-immigration rhetoric gained traction in Greece, coinciding with one of the most devastating[3] fire seasons in recent years. During this period, unfounded claims began circulating on social media and in public discourse, accusing migrants of arson. According to the false claims, migrants obstructed the work of Greek firefighters, two migrants were caught in the act of arson, and a group of migrants exchanged fire with law enforcement officers while trying to evade arrest after being apprehended. Among those who contributed to the proliferation of these claims were media outlets, social media users, and politicians. This anti-migrant narrative and the actors spreading it were examined in Report No. 1.

During the same period, out-of-context videos circulated, purporting to show attempts by migrants to "intrude into Greece." Similar to the previous case, far-right politicians propagated the claims, while a journalist working for an alternative media outlet (with strong affiliations to one of the politicians sharing the narrative) seemed to have played a key role in creating and pushing the narrative. As in any other case, social media users contributed to the widespread dissemination of these videos. This second anti-immigrant narrative was examined in Report No. 2.

[3] https://forest-fire.emergency.copernicus.eu/apps/effis.statistics/estimates/GRC.

From January to June 2024, false claims targeting the LGBTQ+ community in Greece were identified during the public consultation and the subsequent passage of the same-sex marriage law[4]. Similar to the anti-immigration cases, conservative politicians (in some cases, the same individuals), journalists affiliated with alternative media, and social media users contributed to the spread of these allegations. The misleading claims that shaped this anti-LGBTQ+ disinformation, along with the actors involved and contextual information on LGBTQ+ rights in Greece, were analyzed in Report No. 4.

Disinformation targeting Ukraine

Two reports produced for Greece focused on disinformation campaigns targeting Ukraine. Specifically, Report No. 5 examined the narrative that has targeted President Volodymyr Zelensky, First Lady Olena Zelenska, and their close associates, alleging that Western financial aid intended for Ukraine's defense is being misused for personal luxury, a narrative that circulated in Greece as well as Cyprus during the period that MedDMO has been active. Report No. 7 examined the narrative alleging a widespread presence of Nazi ideology among Ukrainians, including officials like Zelensky himself and the deputy director of Kyiv Police, which has been circulating since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In both cases, apart from politicians, alternative media outlets and their affiliated journalists, pro-Russian Telegram channels, and social media users, the Russian disinformation network Pravda contributed to the promotion of the misleading claims supporting these narratives.

Climate change-related disinformation

In Report No. 3, EH looked into a prominent climate-related disinformation narrative circulating in Greece, which alleges a connection between the wildfires that strike the country each year and the construction of inland wind farms in the burned areas. The narrative, which can be traced back to as early as 2018, was examined along with the actors promoting it. This narrative reflects a subtler form of climate skepticism that challenges the extent of the climate crisis, the trustworthiness of climate science, and the role of renewables in addressing it.

COVID-19

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, pseudoscientific claims have circulated in Greece, initially focusing on the nature of the virus itself. By April 2020, misleading claims began to target the COVID-19 vaccines, spreading across both social and traditional media. This wave of mis/disinformation did not subside with the end of the state of emergency; instead, it persisted, including during the past two years of MedDMO's operations. Report No. 9 examined a range of misleading narratives about COVID-19 vaccines that circulated in Greece, including false claims questioning the vaccines' safety and effectiveness, exaggerated or fabricated reports of severe side effects, and conspiracy theories linking the vaccines to sudden or mass deaths, along with an overview of the key actors responsible for disseminating these narratives.

Disinformation triggered by global events

Mis/disinformation triggered by global events is a common phenomenon, also reflected in MedDMO's fact-checking work and, in some cases, further analyzed in the project's narrative reports.

[4] https://www.kodiko.gr/nomothesia/document/945586/nomos-5089-2024.

Report No. 8 examined misleading claims that spread in Greece in connection with the 2024 Paris Olympics. Specifically, false narratives related to gender and LGBTQ+ issues—mainly stemming from the participation[5] of Algerian athlete Imane Khelif—were observed, along with claims tied to religion and the Israel–Hamas conflict. While no clear link was established between the Greek claims and foreign influence, at European level, investigations have traced[6] certain misleading narratives about the Olympics back to Russian actors.

Similarly, Report No. 6 focused on USA-related misleading narratives that circulated in Greece following Trump's inauguration[7] in January 2025. Most of the claims identified centered on USAID and the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia, often originating from or being amplified by Trump and his administration.

AI-driven scams

Report No. 10 slightly diverged from the rest, focusing on the issue of online scams, a topic of major importance, particularly in relation to the DSA[8], yet often overlooked when studying online information integrity. Specifically, the report examined scams detected by fact-checkers in the country since 2023 that made use of AI-generated content. It identified AI-generated material (especially AI lip-sync videos) being used in crypto and alternative medicine scams on Facebook platforms, almost always promoted through paid ads.

Country-specific observations & contextual factors

Greece's complex migration landscape, marked by its geographical position as an entry point into Europe, has long made immigration a highly politicized issue[9]. As highlighted in the relevant reports, this context has allowed political actors to instrumentalize migration, using it as a scapegoat to influence public opinion.

Regarding the Russian–Ukrainian war, while citizens in most Western countries tend to adopt a critical stance towards Russia, public opinion in Greece appears more divided[10]. Greece is also below[11] the European average when it comes to supporting Kyiv and maintaining sanctions on Russia. In this context, Russian propaganda mechanisms seem to play a significant role in disseminating the disinformation narratives detected.

Although multiple studies suggest that Greeks generally acknowledge climate change as a real phenomenon and a significant threat, a 2022 survey[12] revealed that 31.1% of respondents agreed with the statement "Instead of helping the environment, wind turbines harm the environment," while 22.8% neither agreed nor disagreed. Additionally, when presented with the claim "After devastating forest fires, wind farms bloom," more than half

[5] https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2025/mar/15/olympic-boxing-transgender-russian-fake-news-thomas-bach.
[6] https://cdn-dynmedia-1.microsoft.com/is/content/microsoftcorp/microsoft/final/en-us/microsoft-brand/documents/MTAC_Report_Russian_Influence_and_Paris_2024.pdf.
[7] https://www.whitehouse.gov/remarks/2025/01/the-inaugural-address/.
[8] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act-package.
[9] https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1461/files/reports/DTM_Mixed%20Migration%20Flows%20to%20Europe_Yearly_2023_0.pdf.
[10] https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3093.
[11] https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3093.
[12] https://www.dianeosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/climatechange_survey.pdf.

of the respondents (55.1%) agreed, a figure that underscores how widespread the misleading narrative linking wind farms to burned areas has become.

Public opinion in Greece remains[13] divided[14] on the issue of same-sex marriage, according to recent surveys. Despite notable progress in recent years, disinformation targeting LGBTQ+ and gender-related issues continues to find fertile ground in the country.

Regarding USA-related narratives, EDMO had already identified[15] USA-related disinformation as a leading trend in Europe shortly after Trump's inauguration. Report No. 7 found this trend to be particularly prominent in Greece: in February 2025 alone, 17 out of 50 fact-checking articles published by EH (34%) focused directly on the United States.

Finally, the issue of social media scams is particularly significant, especially in light of the Digital Services Act's enforcement. As highlighted in the relevant report, despite META's acknowledgment of the problem and its stated commitments to address it, scams in Greece continue not only to appear on Facebook (the most popular social media platform in the country)[16], but they are often in the form of sponsored advertisements.

3.2 Cyprus

Overview of reports

Cyprus produced seven reports under MedDMO (all of them produced by CUT) around the following topics: immigration, narratives targeting Ukraine and Zelensky, climate change, and falsehoods around celebrities visiting Cyprus. Most of them (four) focused on narratives related to the war in Ukraine, like the narrative that was also identified in Greece, alleging purchases by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Out of the seven reports, five have already been published, and the remaining two will be published before the end of the project.

[13] https://www.protothema.gr/politics/article/1456018/galop-marc-548-nai-ston-gamo-ton-omofulon-kai-529-stin-uiothesia-apo-omofula-zeugaria/?utm.

[14] https://www.tovima.gr/2024/01/08/politics/dimoskopisi-alco-oxi-ston-gamo-ton-omofylon-zeygarion-leei-to-49/.

[15] https://edmo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/EDMO-Horizontal-45.pdf.

[16] https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/Digital_News-Report_2025.pdf.

No	Title	Partner	Country	Date
1	Disinformation report on migration	FCC/CUT	Cyprus	24 July 2024
2	Disinformation narratives about Volodymyr Zelensky in Cyprus	FCC/CUT	Cyprus	21 August 2024
3	Disinformation narratives about climate change in Cyprus	FCC/CUT	Cyprus	21 October 2024
4	Disinformation Narratives About Ronaldinho's Visit to the Occupied Territories	FCC/CUT	Cyprus	7 January 2025
5	Conspiracy theories about Ukrainian labs studying pathogens Published in January 2025	FCC/CUT	Cyprus	16 January 2025
6	The International Community "Abandoning" Ukraine	FCC/CUT	Cyprus	26 June 2025
7	Ukraine "Playing a Double Game" with America and Europe	FCC/CUT	Cyprus	26 June 2025

Table 3: Full list of all the disinformation narrative reports published by MedDMO since June 2024 concerning disinformation narratives in Cyprus

Breakdown of narratives by theme

Immigration

Report No. 1 examined a series of anti-immigration claims that circulated in Cyprus, including allegations about planned attacks in Chloraka, village northwest of Paphos, and the supposed presence of an ex-militant from the Turkish army accused of violent crimes such as the decapitation of Kurds and Christians. A politician, presenting a map of Syria showing the so-called safe areas, misleadingly claimed that there were no safety reasons for Syrians to remain on the island, while another claim significantly inflated the actual number of migrants in Cyprus. Additionally, a claim circulated suggesting that a police officer had been stabbed by delivery men who were immigrants, something that was later refuted by the police.

Ukraine-related disinformation

Report No. 2 examined disinformation targeting Ukraine and President Zelensky, focusing on widespread allegations that he was using Western aid to Ukraine for personal gain by purchasing assets. In the same context, Report No. 5 investigated unfounded conspiracy theories about biological laboratories in Ukraine, allegedly funded by the U.S. to conduct research on dangerous pathogens for the development of bioweapons. Inaccuracies suggesting that Western corporations had bought Ukrainian land, that Ukraine had concealed the true extent of Russian control over valuable lithium deposits, and that the Ukrainian government was hiding the fact that nearly half of its citizens had fled the country were examined in Report No. 7. Finally, Report No. 6 focused on the narrative that Western countries had abandoned Ukraine, a claim that gained traction following Donald Trump's return to power in the U.S. in January 2025. When possible, these reports mentioned the sources that appeared to propagate such narratives, including the Russian disinformation network 'Pravda', Russian officials, pro-Russian Telegram channels, and news websites.

Climate change denial

A narrative denying climate change was identified in Cyprus and examined in Report No. 3. This narrative was based on inaccuracies aiming to downplay the extent or the causes of climate change. An indicative example was the claim that sporadic rainfall, especially during typically dry months like August (such as an instance that occurred on the island in early August 2024), is proof that there are no changes in weather patterns due to climate change.

Disinformation linked to the Cyprus division

The narrative examined in Report No. 4 is specifically related to the ongoing division of the island, with the northern part under the control of the self-declared “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus,” which is recognized only by Turkey. In this context, social media posts claimed that former football star Ronaldinho (Ronaldo de Assis Moreira) had refused to participate in a friendly match in the occupied territories of Cyprus because, allegedly, a friend of his had lost their home during the Turkish invasion, a story that lacked any supporting evidence or official statement from the player or his agent.

Country-specific observations & contextual factors

Disinformation in Cyprus appears to build on deep-rooted social and geopolitical sensitivities. As Report No. 1 highlights, anti-immigrant rhetoric has been intensifying, driven by the country's geographical location and the increasing arrival of migrants. This trend culminated in the summer of 2023, when migrant groups protested against poor living conditions. In response, far-right groups in Limassol organized anti-immigration marches and destroyed migrants' property. The spread of falsehoods around this sensitive issue led to real-world consequences, including social unrest and the further marginalization of already vulnerable groups. Such narratives fuel hate speech and have contributed to the rise of the far right, which, according to the report, has gained momentum and influence within the country's political landscape.

Climate-related disinformation is another area of concern. Similar to the case of anti-immigration rhetoric, based on FCC's work under MedDMO, Cyprus appears to be particularly susceptible to climate-related mis/disinformation. As highlighted in Report No. 3, this vulnerability is linked to the country's specific geographic and climatic conditions (rising temperatures, increasing water scarcity, and heightened environmental risks), which increase the potential impact of mis/disinformation that undermines public understanding of climate change.

When it comes to the Ukraine-related narratives, specifically the one about Zelensky's alleged lavish spending, a notable claim that gained traction in Cyprus falsely alleged that President Zelensky had purchased a casino hotel. What may have contributed to the spread of this claim is the fact that the hotel in question, the Vuni Palace Hotel, is located in Kyrenia, within the occupied part of the island. The story's symbolic implications likely amplified its appeal, and it was further circulated by several major mainstream media outlets as well as pushed by the Russian disinformation network Pravda.

Disinformation in Cyprus also exploits the island's division, with emotionally charged narratives related to the occupied territories, as seen in the claim about Ronaldinho refusing to play in the occupied area.

Overall, the reports focusing on Cyprus and produced under MedDMO revealed that disinformation in the country often exploits local sensitivities around migration and geopolitical identity, while also reflecting transnational trends such as anti-Zelensky narratives and climate denial. These findings point to the importance of both context-specific and cross-border monitoring.

3.3 Malta

Overview of reports

At the time of this deliverable's publication, Malta produced 9 reports under MedDMO (all produced by UoM). Three of these reports explored disinformation related to corruption and institutional trust, while two focused on public health narratives, specifically those concerning COVID-19 and anti-abortion rhetoric. The remaining four reports addressed issues related to online scams, migration, media censorship and anti-protest propaganda. A tenth report is expected to be published by the end of July, but as it is still in the early stages of development, it has not been included or analyzed in this deliverable.

No	Title	Partner	Country	Date
1	The Fallout of Malta's Fraudulent Hospitals Deal: A Look at the Narratives	UoM	Malta	15 July 2024
2	Hoax Posts, Spoofed Sites and Deepfakes: A Glimpse at Cyber Scams in Malta	UoM	Malta	23 August 2024
3	Building Falsehoods: Examining Malta's Construction and Development Narratives	UoM	Malta	9 September 2024
4	Politics before People: Disinformation about Public Inquiries in Malta	UoM	Malta	15 October 2024
5	An Island on the Edge: Population and Migration Narratives in Malta	UoM	Malta	4 December 2024
6	Whitewashing the Web: How Bogus Copyright Claims Submitted to Google are Targeting Maltese Media	UoM	Malta	7 January 2025
7	A Pandemic of False claims: COVID-19 Disinformation in Malta	UoM	Malta	6 February 2025
8	When Lack of Access to Information Fuels Fear: The Case of Malta's Anti-Abortion Misinformation and Disinformation	UoM	Malta	26 May 2025

9	*Estremisti*: How political propaganda has been used to undermine civil society protest against a rights-restricting bill in Malta	UoM	Malta	TBP

Table 4: Full list of all the disinformation narrative reports published by MedDMO since June 2024 concerning disinformation narratives detected in Malta

Breakdown of narratives by theme

Narratives surrounding corruption and institutional trust

Starting with narratives surrounding corruption and institutional trust, Report No. 1 followed a wave of misleading narratives that began circulating across Malta after the conclusion of a magisterial inquiry[17] into a fraudulent deal involving the privatization[18] of three of Malta's state hospitals (said deal was first reported on in 2015 by investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia[19]). These narratives sought to discredit the judicial process, casting doubt on the legitimacy of the inquiry's findings and attempting to reframe the issue as a politically driven attack rather than a matter of public accountability and the rule of law. These claims were actively disseminated by Prime Minister Robert Abela, former Prime Minister Joseph Muscat (who was among those who, following the magisterial inquiry, faced criminal charges in relation to the hospitals deal), members of the Labour Party, Labour-owned media outlets, and party supporters, both online and during mass rallies. Central to these narratives was the allegation that the inquiry's timing was politically motivated and deliberately orchestrated to damage the Labour Party ahead of the 2024 local council and European elections, with the inquiry being completed days ahead of polling day. Some questioned the integrity of the magistrate leading the investigation, branding her as biased, while others spread inaccurate claims about the financial value of the deal and the amounts allegedly stolen, or insisted that the deal was, in fact, cost-effective and justified.

In the context of corruption, Malta – a country characterised by close relationships between politicians and developers – is also facing a construction crisis driven by widespread illegal building practices and a lack of proper regulation. The state's failure to enforce safety standards has led to a growing number of deaths and injuries. In the midst of this crisis, false claims have also begun to circulate, often aimed at making construction projects appear safer, more sustainable, or more legally sound than they really are (Report No. 3). These narratives, spread by developers, authorities, and political figures alike, serve to obscure accountability and ease public concern.

[17] https://web.archive.org/web/20240513172832/https:/timesofmalta.com/article/joseph-muscat-court-no-doubt-charged-vitals-inquiry-concluded.1091746.

[18] https://web.archive.org/web/20240530091608/https://timesofmalta.com/article/vitals-steward-accutor-bosses-among-34-new-people-face-charges.1092864.

[19] https://daphnecaruanagalizia.com/2015/03/the-government-already-has-its-investor-for-gozo-hospital-oxley-capital-group/

Report No. 4 links closely to Report No. 3, as it examined the narratives pushed by the Maltese government against the initiation of public inquiries into major incidents (these are investigations that seek to answer the question of if and how the state failed to prevent an incident). The report illustrates how the government has used the same arguments to resist initiating a public inquiry into the tragic death of a 20-year-old, Jean Paul Sofia, who was killed in the collapse of a partially built factory in 2022[20], as it did to resist a public inquiry into the 2017 assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia[21]. The government misleadingly argued, among other things, that such an investigation would serve the same function as a magisterial inquiry, downplaying the need for broader accountability and public transparency.

Online scams

Regarding cyber scams that emerged in the Maltese context between October 2023 and June 2024, Report No. 2 analyzed and exposed the spread of manipulated multimedia. These included hoax posts that exploited the images of several high-profile figures, from the current and former prime ministers Robert Abela and Joseph Muscat to journalists, local celebrities and other well-known Maltese figures from politics and the media[22]. The report highlighted a series of mimic posts, such as fabricated interviews allegedly published by Times of Malta[23], as well as fake[24] or doctored[25] videos.

Narratives targeting marginalized communities

Report No. 5 examined disinformation surrounding migration and population statistics in Malta, one of Europe's most densely populated countries. These misleading claims are often propagated by individuals in positions of power, including the Prime Minister, the Minister for Home Affairs, and the Leader of the Opposition. The report identified key themes such as: the portrayal of NGO rescue operations as a pull factor for migration; inflated or fabricated population figures; exaggerated claims about population growth; misleading statements about migrant arrivals; manipulated political messaging; misinformation about voting rights of foreign nationals; and unfounded statistics regarding foreigners renting property.

Claim related to media censorship

In 2024, a series of articles by Maltese news outlets and journalists covering the corruption scandal discussed in Report No. 1 were removed from Google's search results following a mysterious wave of copyright infringement claims. Report No. 6 investigated how this may represent an attempt to suppress and conceal key media reports related to an unfolding political controversy.

[20] https://archive.ph/XTZOh.

[21] https://web.archive.org/web/20240912105912/https:/timesofmalta.com/article/state-should-be-held-responsible-for-journalists-assassination.889936

[22] https://meddmo.eu/fact-check-malta-dont-get-duped-well-known-maltese-people-are-the-subject-of-a-new-crypto-scam/

[23] https://meddmo.eu/fact-check-scam-posts-mimic-times-of-malta-interview-with-robert-abela/.

[24] https://meddmo.eu/fact-check-fake-video-shows-ursula-von-der-leyen-promoting-investment-scam/.

[25] https://meddmo.eu/fact-check-fake-video-shows-joseph-muscat-promoting-a-crypto-scam/.

Narratives surrounding public health and medical care

Report No. 7 delved into COVID-19-related narratives, many of which began circulating[26] in Malta even before the virus reached the country and continued to resurface periodically. False claims about infection rates, vaccines, mask use, and lockdown measures frequently went viral on social media, often amplified by politicians.

Abortion rights remain a critical public health issue in Malta, the only EU country that maintains a total ban[27] on abortion except when the mother's life is at risk. Report No. 8 explored some of the most prominent anti-abortion narratives circulating in Malta and highlighted the perspectives of pro-choice advocates working to counter them. The report identified key themes such as: the false claim that providing information about abortion is illegal; confusion and fear surrounding mandatory reporting of women seeking or having had abortions; the chilling effect this creates within healthcare settings; and the scientifically unsupported and potentially dangerous notion of "abortion pill reversal".

Country-specific observations & contextual factors

Malta's unique political and media landscape creates fertile ground for the spread of disinformation narratives. Report No. 1**,** focused on the fraudulent deal involving the privatisation of three state hospitals, revealed that false and misleading claims about the magisterial inquiry[28], which recommended criminal charges related to the corruption[29], were actively disseminated by members of the Labour Party, Labour-owned media outlets, and party supporters, both online and during mass rallies. This takes place in a context where Malta, a small and densely populated island, is deeply shaped by political tribalism and patronage[30]. Both major political parties own television and radio stations, newspapers, and news websites, while the state broadcaster is widely seen as favouring the ruling party.

Apart from being heavily affected by political polarisation, Malta's media landscape is also affected by censorship efforts aimed at suppressing independent journalism. Journalists have faced legal harassment through SLAPPs (strategic lawsuits against public participation)[31], and some have been the target of government-linked campaigns[32]. In addition, as analyzed in Report No**.** 6, digital censorship has intensified recently with seemingly

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[26] https://web.archive.org/web/20240614135024/https://timesofmalta.com/article/coronavirus-fake-news-and-misinformation-spreads-online.773801.

[27] https://time.com/6173229/countries-abortion-illegal-restrictions/.

[28] https://web.archive.org/web/20240513172832/https:/timesofmalta.com/article/joseph-muscat-court-no-doubt-charged-vitals-inquiry-concluded.1091746.

[29] https://web.archive.org/web/20240530091608/https://timesofmalta.com/article/vitals-steward-accutor-bosses-among-34-new-people-face-charges.1092864.

[30] https://rsf.org/en/country/malta

[31] See Figure 3 on page 15 of https://www.the-case.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/CASE-2024-report-vf_compressed-1.pdf
Furthermore, a 2023 report named Malta as the country with the highest number of SLAPPs per capita in Europe.: https://www.independent.com.mt/file.aspx?f=234743

[32] https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2024-05-15/newspaper-leader/TMID-Editorial-Instigating-hatred-against-journalists-6736261112

coordinated bogus copyright complaints used to remove politically sensitive articles from Google's search results, particularly those related to major corruption scandals[33].

Disinformation related to Malta's construction sector, as analysed in Report No. 3, emerges within a context of overdevelopment, weak regulation, and entrenched political patronage. The country has experienced a construction boom without the necessary checks and balances, leading to illegal building practices, safety violations, and fatal incidents[34]. One such incident that drew particular attention to the dire state of the construction sector was the 2022 death of 20-year-old Jean Paul Sofia in a site collapse. The Maltese government resisted calls for a public inquiry; as Report No. 4 showed, the government propagated the same narratives it had used against a public inquiry into Daphne Caruana Galizia's 2017 assassination. A public inquiry was eventually held in each case, and both found that the state should shoulder responsibility[35].

Regarding cyber scams in the Maltese context, it is important to note that while such scams appear across many countries, including Greece and Cyprus, Malta's relatively small population of around half a million means that these campaigns often achieve disproportionately high reach. For example, as analyzed in Report No. 2, a fake Times of Malta interview featuring the Maltese Prime Minister reached 130,000[36] views within just one month.

As highlighted in Report No. 5, migration and population figures have long been the subject of disinformation in Malta, Europe's most densely populated country. Measuring just 316 km² with a population of over 563,000[37], Malta often becomes the focus of fear-based arguments about overpopulation, which frequently fuel racist and xenophobic sentiment. As one of the European Union's closest points to North Africa, Malta is often seen as a gateway to safety and security by refugees of war and political persecution in the region, and these people tend to face abuse fuelled by stereotypes. Indeed, those who stand out as being visibly foreign - namely darker-skinned immigrants from outside Europe - are the primary target of harmful narratives, highlighting systemic stereotypes surrounding migration.

Abortion remains one of the most contentious human rights issues globally, and in Malta, it is especially controversial, with the country having the strictest abortion laws[38] in the European Union. Malta's criminalisation of abortion dates back to the 1800s[39], and until 2023, it was among the few countries with a total ban[40]. That year, two limited legal exceptions were introduced: abortion is allowed only if a woman's life is at risk or if her health is in "grave jeopardy" that may lead to death, and it can only happen with the approval of a three-doctor panel. As explored in Report No. 8, lack of access to information and lack of discussion is central to the mis/disinformation problem, and although Malta is not unique in seeing a spread of false and misleading narratives about abortion, its strict laws and conservative attitude make it an interesting case study.

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[33] https://edmo.eu/blog/whitewashing-the-web-how-copyright-complaints-made-to-google-can-be-abused-by-bad-actors/

[34] https://www.piln.mt/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/06/Construction-Report-Daphne-Caruana-Galizia-Foundation.pdf

[35] https://web.archive.org/web/20240912105912/https:/timesofmalta.com/article/state-should-be-held-responsible-for-journalists-assassination.889936 and https://www.daphne.foundation/en/2024/03/02/jean-paul-sofia

[36] https://meddmo.eu/fact-check-scam-posts-mimic-times-of-malta-interview-with-robert-abela/.

[37] https://archive.ph/1WW2A.

[38] https://www.doctorsforchoice.mt/abortion-law.

[39] https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/9/eng/pdf.

[40] https://time.com/6173229/countries-abortion-illegal-restrictions/.

3.4 Common patterns identified

In addition to their geographic proximity, Cyprus, Greece, and Malta face a number of common challenges, such as migration, climate change, and public health, which are often exploited by disinformation narratives.

Similarities in Greece and Cyprus

Based on the analysis of the reports, as well as the day-to-day workflow of fact-checkers in both Greece and Cyprus, it has been observed that, due to the shared language (Greek), many claims that circulate in one country tend to appear shortly after in the other. This explains why we often see similar claims in both countries.

Naturally, each country tailored its reports to reflect its own national context, highlighting the specific circumstances in which each claim was disseminated. For example, Greece produced two reports related to the Russia–Ukraine war, while Cyprus produced three. Both countries addressed the narrative concerning the alleged luxury properties owned by President Zelensky and his associates, each focusing on how the narrative spread and resonated within its own country.

Additionally, both Greece and Cyprus published reports concerning the existence, causes, or consequences of climate change.

Similar narratives in all three countries

Despite the language difference, Malta has also shown considerable overlap in themes with both Greece and Cyprus. Specifically, all three countries addressed the issue of migration, as they each face significant migratory flows and a high volume of mis/disinformation related to the topic.

Additionally, both Greece and Malta addressed narratives related to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as misleading or fraudulent posts and scams.

Local issues in each country

Lastly, each country also addressed disinformation narratives tied to local issues:

- **Cyprus:** Focused on false claims surrounding Ronaldinho's visit to the occupied territories, with narratives exploiting the island's division.[41]
- **Greece:** Examined misleading narratives targeting the LGBTQ+ community during the 2024 public debate on marriage equality and the legalization of same-sex marriage, making Greece the 37th country worldwide, the 16th in the EU, and the first Christian Orthodox nation to fully legalize marriage and adoption for same-sex couples[42].

[41] https://meddmo.eu/cyprus-report-on-disinformation-narratives-about-sensitive-political-issues/
[42] https://meddmo.eu/greece-report-on-disinformation-targetting-the-lgbtq-community-in-greece/

- **Malta:** Explored the fallout from its fraudulent hospitals deal and the disinformation narratives that emerged around it, highlighting issues of corruption and institutional trust in the country[43].

Actors

Regarding the actors behind the false claims, we observed some similar patterns as well.

In the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, Russian-affiliated actors, such as Russian media outlets and the Pravda network, were identified as key sources of disinformation efforts in both Greece and Cyprus.

Although in both Greece and Cyprus there have been instances of political figures spreading misleading claims, such as in the case of immigration-related narratives, the phenomenon appears to be more pronounced in Malta, where in most cases (mainly concerning corruption and institutional trust), the primary sources of disinformation have been sitting and former members of the government, as well as affiliated officials.

[43] https://meddmo.eu/malta-disinformation-narrative-report-on-hospitals-deal/

4 Conclusions

This deliverable provides an analysis of the disinformation narrative reports produced by MedDMO and published during the final year (2024–2025) of the project's first cycle, focusing on dominant narratives circulating in Greece, Malta, and Cyprus.

As of June 2025, a total of 27 reports have been completed, slightly fewer than initially planned. Of these, 22 have already been published on the MedDMO website, while the remaining 5 (already finalized) are scheduled for publication in July, the project's final month.

As the analysis of the reports reveals, certain topics such as immigration, climate change, the war in Ukraine, and public health emerged as dominant areas for disinformation, with misleading narratives spreading across more than one country. Migration-related narratives appeared in all three countries. Narratives about Ukraine and climate change gained traction in both Greece and Cyprus, while COVID-19-related claims were identified in Malta and Greece. At the same time, national contexts and socio-political circumstances shaped the emergence of country-specific disinformation themes. For example, narratives surrounded marriage equality and seasonal wildfires in Greece, corruption in Malta, and the political division of the island in Cyprus.

When it comes to the actors behind the spread of the analyzed narratives, disinformation in all three countries was found to circulate predominantly online. The main drivers were social media users and alternative media outlets, which played a key role in amplifying misleading content. Political actors were also central to the dissemination of these narratives. This was particularly evident in Malta, where both current and former government officials were directly involved in spreading many of the claims that became the basis for MedDMO's national reports. In Greece and Cyprus, which together produced five reports related to the Russia–Ukraine war (three from Greece and two from Cyprus), several narratives were traced back to Russian disinformation channels and networks, such as the Pravda network. This connection points to the presence of foreign influence and coordinated disinformation campaigns targeting local audiences.

These findings, drawn from the analysis of narratives in Greece, Cyprus, and Malta, offer valuable insights into the disinformation landscape in the Mediterranean and can inform more targeted and context-aware responses.

5 Annex 1

No	Title	Partner	Country	Date
1	Disinformation narrative report around the wildfire in Northern Greece by Ellinika Hoaxes	EH	Greece	25 June 2024
2	The Fallout of Malta's Fraudulent Hospitals Deal: A Look at the Narratives	UoM	Malta	15 July 2024
3	Disinformation report on migration	FCC/CUT	Cyprus	24 July 2024
4	Disinformation narratives about Volodymyr Zelensky in Cyprus	FCC/CUT	Cyprus	21 August 2024
5	Hoax Posts, Spoofed Sites and Deepfakes: A Glimpse at Cyber Scams in Malta	UoM	Malta	23 August 2024
6	Crossing the Lines: How the Far-Right exploited out-of-context videos to spread anti-immigrant rhetoric	EH	Greece	3 September 2024
7	Building Falsehoods: Examining Malta's Construction and Development Narratives	UoM	Malta	9 September 2024
8	Politics before People: Disinformation about Public Inquiries in Malta	UoM	Malta	15 October 2024

9	Disinformation narratives about climate change in Cyprus	FCC/CUT	Cyprus	21 October 2024
10	An Island on the Edge: Population and Migration Narratives in Malta	UoM	Malta	4 December 2024
11	Disinformation Narratives About Ronaldinho's Visit to the Occupied Territories	FCC/CUT	Cyprus	7 January 2025
12	Whitewashing the Web: How Bogus Copyright Claims Submitted to Google are Targeting Maltese Media	UoM	Malta	7 January 2025
13	Conspiracy theories about Ukrainian labs studying pathogens Published in January 2025	FCC/CUT	Cyprus	16 January 2025
14	Winds of Misinformation: The Alleged Connection Between Wildfires and Wind Turbines - Similar and Emerging Misconceptions	EH	Greece	4 February 2025
15	A Pandemic of False claims: COVID-19 Disinformation in Malta	UoM	Malta	6 February 2025

16	False Claims Targeting the LGBTQ+ Community in Greece's 2024 Marriage Equality Discussion	EH	Greece	11 March 2025
17	Pro-Russian Disinformation in Greece: The False Narrative of Ukrainian Officials' Misuse of Western Aid for Lavish Spending	EH	Greece	24 March 2025
18	U.S.-Related Misleading Claims in Greece: Tracking False Narratives Since Trump's 2025 Inauguration	EH	Greece	7 May 2025
19	Tracing the Pro-Russian narrative linking Ukraine with Nazism: The claims fueling the narrative in Greece since 2022	EH	Greece	12 May 2025
20	Misleading Claims Around the 2024 Paris Olympics: A Focus on Greece	EH	Greece	20 May 2025
21	Greece: European Parliament elections disinformation report	CERTH	Greece, Cyprus, Malta	22 May 2025

22	When Lack of Access to Information Fuels Fear: The Case of Malta's Anti-Abortion Misinformation and Disinformation	UoM	Malta	26 May 2025
23	COVID-19 Vaccine Mis/Disinformation in Greece: An Analysis of the Most Prominent Narratives and Actors	EH	Greece	TBP
24	Deepfake scams on Facebook	EH	Greece	TBP
25	The International Community "Abandoning" Ukraine	FCC/CUT	Cyprus	26 June
26	Ukraine "Playing a Double Game" with America and Europe	FCC/CUT	Cyprus	26 June
27	*Estremisti*: How political propaganda has been used to undermine civil society protest against a rights-restricting bill in Malta	UoM	Malta	TBP

Table 5: Table with all the disinformation narrative reports produced and published by MedDMO up until June 2025


Mediterranean Digital
Media Observatory