

European Perspectives: The Impact of Disinformation on the Health of Democracy and the Digital Environment

May 19, 2022

Croatian Journalists' Association (CJA), Perkovčeva 12, Zagreb

Expert international conference is designed as a constructive discussion between relevant experts, journalists, media practitioners, academics and other interested parties. Conference will aim to gather decision-makers, journalists, media representatives, fact-checkers, civil society and members of academia. The media will be invited to the conference and press releases will be provided to inform the general public.

09:30 – 10:00 Registration, welcome coffee and networking

10:00 Opening of the conference

- **Oriana Ivković Novokmet**, executive director of Gong
- **Věra Jourová**, Values and Transparency (video message)

10:10 Panel Discussion: Regulating big tech as a vaccine against disinformation?

- **Lauri Tierala**, programme director of European Digital Media Observatory (**EDMO**)
- **Dorota Głowacka**, Panoptikon
- **Jan Penfrat**, European Digital Rights (**EDRi**)
- **Marijana Grbeša**, Faculty of Political Science of Zagreb University (**FPS**) and **Pro-fact**

Disinformation is not a new phenomenon, but the development of digital platforms has contributed to their evolution and dissemination capabilities due to increased communication possibilities and information access. With the increase in the frequency of citizen information through digital platforms, Europe has been a witness to unprecedented levels of disinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic, with no signs of reducing. At the same time, disinformation are not limited to digital platforms, since they spill over into the "real life", where citizens, under the influence of consumed disinformation, increasingly endanger the health of the entire democratic public sphere. Despite their dangers, digital platforms are doing little to control disinformation, which has led to the need to establish European organizations specializing in spotting and combating disinformation narratives. The panelists will present their unique experiences and knowledge of successful European practices and methods of combating misinformation, after which they will determine the extent to which digital platforms enable the spread of misinformation and how platforms can be regulated.

11:20 Coffee break

11:30 Panel Discussion: How to enhance democracy by strengthening the media ecosystem?

- **Maja Sever**, European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) and Trade Union of Croatian Journalists (TUCJ)
- **Karina Stasiuk-Krajewska**, from the private Polish University of Social Sciences and Humanities (SWPS) and CEDMO hub
- **Ieva Ivanauskaitė**, DIGIRES and Delfi.lt
- **Ana Brakus**, Faktograf and Pro-fact

- **Mato Brautović**, University of Dubrovnik and Pro-fact
- **Dražen Hoffmann**, Gong and Pro-fact

The health of democracy is directly related to the health of the media ecosystem. The role of the media in a democracy is to react in a timely manner and reveal new political issues, ensuring a media literate and informed public, while preventing long-term negative consequences for democracy. Without quality media and an informed public, democracy cultivates not politically educated citizens, but rather, political vassals, which are less likely to react to declining democratic values and rules. However, growing financial and political pressure on the media, reduced citizen support for journalism, poor citizen media use, disinformation spreading on social media, and the emphasis on publishing speed, have endangered the media ecosystem across Europe, which can no longer play its key role in a democratic society. Panelists from the fields of media, journalism, media literacy, fact-checking and academia will, by presenting their unique perspectives on the media ecosystem and ways to empower it, establish a comprehensive set of recommendations for strengthening the health of democracy.

13:00 Lunch Break