



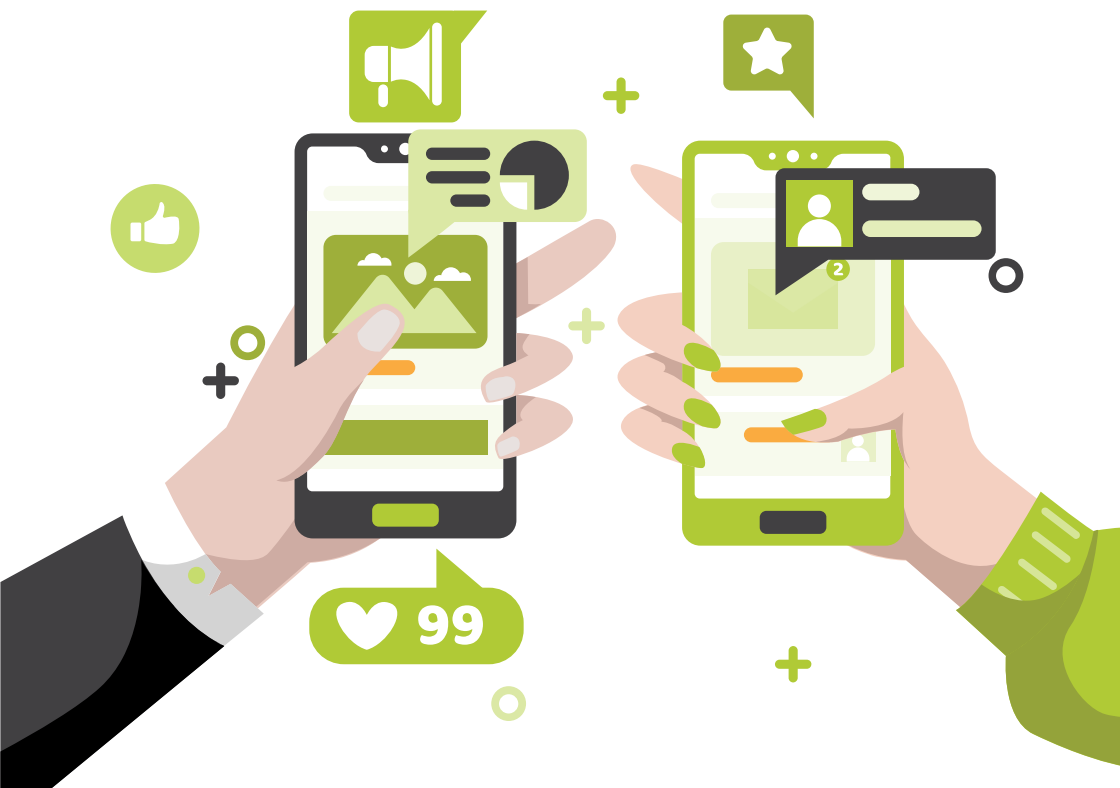
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Demokratija za razvoj

INFORMATION DISORDER: ITS IMPACT ON THE INFORMATION OF CITIZENS



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Pristina, August 2022

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This report was published by the Democracy for Development Institute (D4D) within the project "Combating Misinformation and Restoring Citizens' Trust To Media", supported by NDI and USAID. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the Democracy for Development Institute and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of NDI and USAID.

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1 | Introduction

As a follow-up to the monitoring of online portals and social networks, D4D presents its report for the third quarter or the fourth report overall. Last year, D4D launched its *first report*,¹ after monitoring the election campaign and run-off elections in Kosovo, while early this year *the first quarter report (Q1)* was launched², by monitoring online portals and social networks in the period October-November and December 2021. This year, the monitoring of news items was done for the months of January-February-March, in which case D4D launched its *second quarter report (Q2)*, after monitoring online portals and social networks. Hence, the present report is the third (Q3) on which D4D has been working, after monitoring articles published between April - May - June. This report also includes the monitoring of following categories: political divisions and harsh language, Covid-19, external influence, Special Court, Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, misogyny and online violence against women.

The feature of this report, as in the previous one, is the analysis of articles reporting on the conflict between Ukraine-Russia, specifically news items falling under the category of external influence. Both these categories of news were analyzed in two languages; Albanian and Serbian. What is characteristic of this report, resulting from the monitoring of online portals and social networks, are articles containing *harsh language, hate speech* and news with *exaggerated headlines*. This report also provides conclusions and recommendations addressed to news portals, political entities, media and citizens.

¹ Election campaign under scrutiny: Do information disorders threaten election integrity: available at: <https://d4d-ks.org/punimet/fushata-zgjedhore-ne-llupe/>

² News portals and social media under scrutiny: How much are information disorders affecting the lives of citizens, available at: https://d4d-ks.org/ep-content/uploads/2022/03/D4D_Q1report_SHQ_Final.pdf

2 | Methodology

The purpose of this report is to identify news that contain information disorders which, intentionally or not, have had the effect of misinforming citizens, inciting hatred against individuals or different groups, as well as to familiarize the public with the presence of information disorders and the need for news checking. As in previous reports, this report also analyzes and reflects on articles and posts with information disorders that are published and shared through online portals and social networks in Kosovo in two languages: Albanian and Serbian.

D4D has continued monitoring online portals and social media. This report includes the results of monitoring articles on online portals and social networks for three months, between 1 April - 30 June. Monitoring was done using two platforms, *MediaToolkit* and *Crowdtangel*. The monitoring was conducted simultaneously in two samples: one in Albanian and the other in Serbian language. The Albanian language sample included monitoring of 76 online portals, 203 Facebook pages and 10 groups and 32 Twitter accounts. While the Serbian language sample included monitoring of 55 online portals, 16 Facebook pages and 1 group, and 18 Twitter accounts.

Table 1. Number of online portals and social networks monitored throughout this period.

		Facebook		Online Portals	Twitter Accounts
		Page	Group		
Sample	ALB	203	10	76	32
	SRB	16	1	55	18
Total		411			

The reason why the two above-mentioned platforms were used, is that both of these platforms collect numerical data. *MediaToolkit* measured the potential reach of articles and posts on online portals and Twitter accounts, *Crowdtangle* measured interactions (like, love, care, haha, wow, sad, angry, comment and share) on Facebook.

It should be noted that many Kosovo online portals operating in Serbian language take news directly from Serbian online portals, a significant portion of the monitored portals in the Serbian language sample include portals operating in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, Albanian language sample included some portals that operate in Albania and North Macedonia. Examples from Albanian and Serbian samples will be included throughout this report. Online portals, Facebook pages and groups, and Twitter accounts have been selected based on the number of followers they have had, the fact that they may have a greater potential influence over citizens and that the speed with which information can be disseminated, can be many times higher than those with the lower number of followers. In addition, online portals were also selected based on the portal address, contact number, based on whether a portal has an editor-in-chief and an editor or not. D4D built a database of keywords on the platforms monitored, to better identify news related to these categories. They are category-specific key words formed to go deeper into specific categories.

The categories on which the report is focused include: External influence, political divisions and harsh language, Special Court, Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, misogyny and online violence against women as well as Covid-19. However, what sets this report apart from the previous ones is the greater focus on articles and posts that reported on the Ukraine-Russia war. Nevertheless, this fact does not hold true for both samples, but only for the Albanian language one. While in the Albanian language sample an increase is observed in the volume of news produced on the situation in Ukraine, in the Serbian language sample situation is quite different. In the Albanian language sample, therefore, in contrast to the period of the first quarter (Q1) monitoring

report, the news within this category of monitoring increased by 162 percent, while compared to the previous period of the second quarter (Q2) report, they increased by 62 percent. This category, in fact, is the only one that has marked an increase compared to other ones. This indicates an increased focus of online portals and social networks in the Albanian language sample, on the war between Ukraine and Russia. Meanwhile, in the Serbian language sample, in contrast to the Q2 report, this period marks a 30% decrease in the volume of news about the war in Ukraine, produced by the Serbian media (see Figure 2).

Figure 1. Number of keywords used throughout October 2021 - June 2022 by category, in the Albanian language sample. Source: D4D calculations

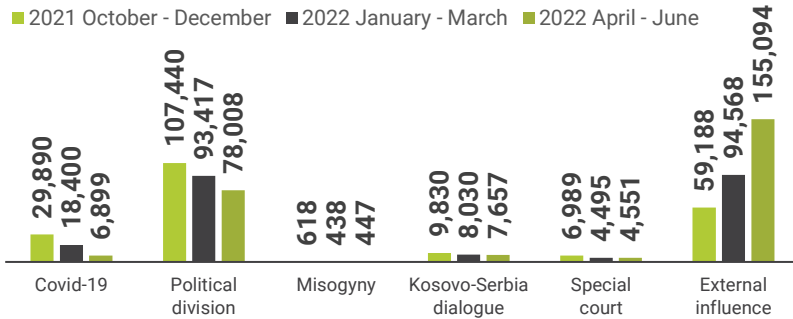
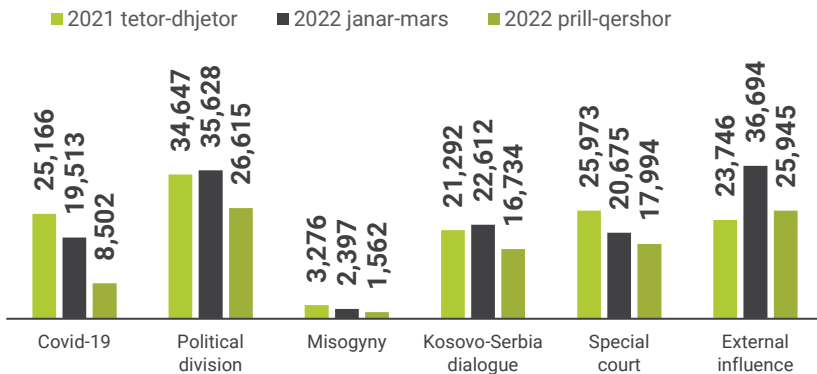



Figure 2. Number of keywords used throughout October 2021 - June 2022 by category, in the Serbian language sample. Source: D4D calculations

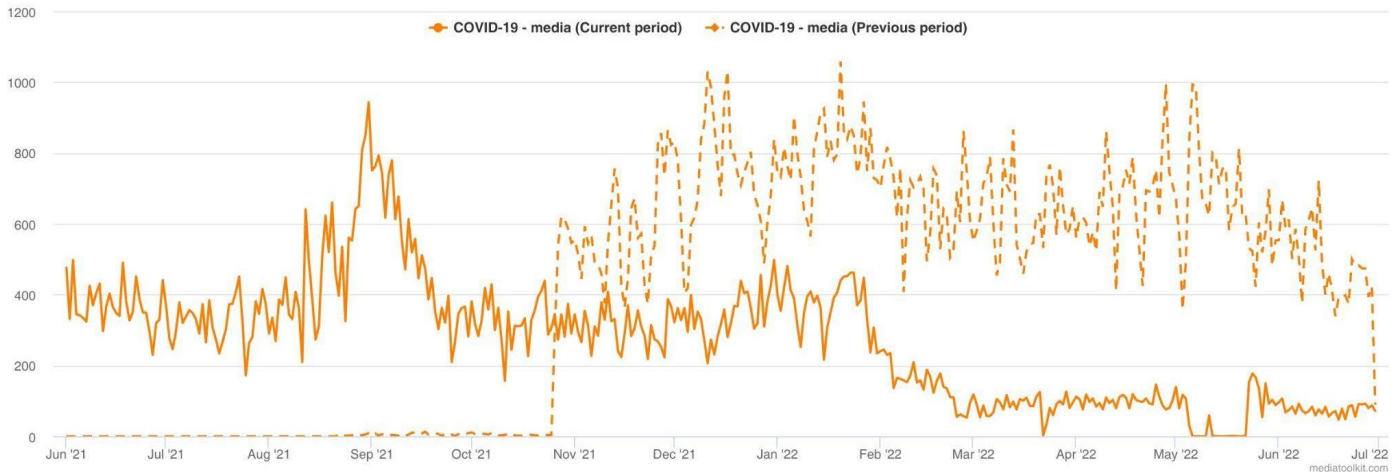




These categories include the monitoring of information disorders involving intentional or unintentional dissemination and publication of untrue, manipulated, exaggerated information or information containing harsh, sexist or hate speech. For each of these categories, articles and posts with potentially higher reach were initially filtered, as a way to measure the impact of these articles on readers, and then subsequently, the content of the articles was analyzed by classifying them into categories of news with information disorders.

Figure 3. Number of news items with keywords about Covid-19.

Unlike other reports, in this monitoring period, as in the previous one, no false narratives related to Covid-19 were found, including here articles from online portals and social networks that have exhibited information distortions. This can also be seen in Figure 1, with the number of articles mentioning Covid-19 as a keyword. Therefore, this report provides no examples thereof, in either Albanian or Serbian language samples.



Based on these categories, D4D also classified articles with information disorders, finding the highest rate of articles with information disorders in the Albanian language sample in this report in external influence and political divisions' categories. Whilst in the political divisions category harsh and offensive language, and exaggerated headlines were used, in the category of external influence, fake news and conspiracies prevailed. While in the Serbian language sample, the category that had the most articles with information disorders included political divisions and harsh language.

While conducting the monitoring, certain information were stored in order to ensure the veracity of the data, as well as due to the fact that sometimes it some articles or posts are removed after being posted by certain portals or groups. On this occasion, we created a database storing the following:

- Screenshots;
- Numerical data, such as the number of potential readers, distribution and other interactions such as likes, comments and shares;
- Headlines of articles with photos, posting date and the name of the news publisher.

Moreover, D4D has taken a step further to analyze the presence of women at decision-making positions in politics. D4D analyzed posts they had been mentioned in on Facebook as well as their portrayal, including the comments of citizens on them. D4D sampled 20 posts that generated the most comments about women. Thereafter, D4D analyzed the citizens' comments about these women. Out of a total of 7,307 comments generated by these posts, D4D analyzed ten percent thereof or 729 comments and managed to present some findings in relation to the approach of all those leaving comments, towards women in politics.

3 | Key Findings

In the analysis of 2,600 articles, we have noticed a significant number of articles and posts that had information disorders. This includes articles and posts that have promoted political division, insults, harsh and sexist language, hate speech, speech taken out of context, articles or posts with untrue, manipulated, fabricated content and exaggerated headlines. Taking into account that during the monitoring period in the previous report, news related to the Ukraine-Russia conflict were also monitored, in this period as well, special emphasis was put on news related to this conflict. What has been observed overall in this period, despite the fact that the number of news items was smaller than in the Q2 period, is a greater number of news items with information disorders in the category of political division and harsh language, the Ukraine-Russia conflict, but also in terms of online misogyny and violence against women. Specifically, the narratives that were present in the previous report have been repeated, though in other wording and in other formats.

In terms of online violence against women, the comments of the digital audience on Facebook were also monitored, and the comments were surveyed by defining a sample of comments for the posts that had the most interactions. The outcomes depict a harsh language of those leaving comments, against women in politics.

It is worth noting that among the events that have produced the most information disorders, or misinformation, is the decision of the Government of Kosovo regarding reciprocity in relation to Serbia's identity cards. While when discussing other categories, the narratives of the political division category were mostly dominated by articles with fake content and articles with offensive language, affecting mostly the members of the Assembly of Kosovo, the Prime Minister of Kosovo, while insulting language attacks against Prime Minister Albin Kurti have also dominated the Serbian language sample.

On the other hand, when analyzing articles in the category of misogyny and online violence against women, compared to the previous report,

this category appears to have more articles in this period. In the Albanian language sample, there were articles, posts and comments targeting a group of women who hold political positions. Some of them include the President of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani, the Minister of Justice, Albulena Haxhiu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Donika Gërvalla, and the members of the Assembly of Kosovo, such as Mimoza Kusari Lila, Ganimete Musliu, Blerta Deliu-Kodra, Ardiana Matoshi, and Fatmire Mulhaxha Kollçaku. The analysis of this category also included the comments on social networks.

In the analysis of articles and posts, news items for the months of April - June, in the category of news about the Special Court, the Albanian language sample was dominated by news items with exaggerated headlines, those taken out of context, hate speech and offensive language. On the other hand, in the sample in the Serbian language, monitored using the same monitoring method, 18 articles were recorded to contain information disorders. Exaggerated (click bait) headlines and fake news and conspiracy and hate speech dominated the area, while the examples that had the most potential interaction and the most impact are reflected below.

The total number of articles and posts analyzed, and containing information disorders, in both samples, was 2,600. In this monitoring period, in the Albanian language sample, there were 1,300 articles and posts analyzed, of which 81 had information disorders, which generated 29,044 social media interactions and reached 1,338,791 potential readers.

While in the Serbian language sample, 1,300 articles and posts were also analyzed, of which 156 articles and posts had information disorders, which generated 172,758 interactions in social networks, and reached 8,012,771 potential readers. Below are examples of articles and posts that contain information disorders in both samples.

Even the number of interactions on social networks was greater than the Q1 and Q2 reports. The number of interactions reached almost 200 thousand. For the first time, the number of interactions in the

sample in the Serbian language is greater than the one in the Albanian language. This includes a comparison with the election report and not only with the Q1 and Q2 reports.

In the volume of fake news, there is also a serious shift of figures. This period records more articles and posts with information distortion than the last two periods combined ($Q1 + Q2 = 215 / Q3=237$).

Potential reach notes a decline from the previous period, though it remains in high numbers ($Q2= 10,558,718 / Q2=9,351,562$).

Table 2. April - May - June report

	Albanian	Serbian	Total
Articles and posts analyzed	1,300	1,300	2,600
Social network interactions	29,044	169,992	199,036
Articles and posts containing information disorders	81	156	237
People who potentially read articles with information disorders	1,338,791	8,012,771	9,351,562

External influence

During the April - June monitoring period, in the analysis of articles and posts in this category in the Albanian language sample, the news items related to the war in Ukraine had the greatest impact. The narrative that Albanians are voluntarily fighting in Ukraine continued in this period, similar to the previous one. There were also articles with exaggerated and unverified headlines related to false statements about the end of the war in Ukraine. Furthermore, there were also unverified news about the illness of Russian President, Vladimir Putin.

Meanwhile, in the Serbian language sample, there were fake news that Spain had recognized Kosovo, that Great Britain is supplying Kosovo with arms, and exaggerated headlines about NATO interventions trying to strike a balance between Russian aggression and NATO interventions in the Balkans.

In addition, the Serbian language sample was dominated by articles with false content and articles with exaggerated headlines. The article that had the major potential reach included the statement by the president of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, claiming that the government of Kosovo is working to deport Serbs who live in Kosovo.

Examples from the Albanian language sample

The article titled, *“Russia ends war on May 9? Minister Lavrov puts an end to doubts”*, was a news item that was posted on online portals. This news item is misinformation, since it is an article whose headline is taken out of context. The article talks about the Liberation Day after the Second World War. This story had 78,046 potential readers, and had 14 interactions, including 13 likes and 1 comment.

Rusia i jep fund luftës më 9 Maj?
Ministri Lavrov i jep fund dyshimeve

Top: Yendro # May 9, 2022



The Mayor of Kyiv, Vitaly Klitschko, was improperly quoted in a portal called “Le Canton 27”, to have stated that he thanked Kosovo and the Albanians for their military and humanitarian contribution to the ongoing war in Ukraine. However, this news has no truth, because the Mayor himself publicly denied saying such things about Albanians on his Facebook page. The news item also mentions a detail that implies that the military



f **Klitschko: Faleminderit Kosovë,**
 t **shqiptarë! Siç u çliruat ju nga**
 o **Serbia, edhe ne do të çlirohemi nga**
 o **Rusia**

aid to Ukraine includes “volunteer” fighters. This narrative is similar to the false narrative in the past report, promoted by Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, about the participation of fighters from Kosovo in this war. This news item was disseminated by ten portals in Kosovo and Albania, and had 49,322 potential readers, and 1,580 interactions on social networks, of which 1,115 likes, 432 comments and 33 shares on social networks.

Examples from the Serbian language sample

The news item titled: *“Russia blatantly humiliated the fake state of Kosovo in the United Nations! Ana taught Pristina a lesson like no one before”*, is a news item produced by online portals in Serbia, based on the statement of Ana Evstingneeva, the Permanent Deputy Representative of Russia to the UN. She had stated that Russia's

position towards Kosovo remains unchanged, where she also mentioned the NATO bombings, which according to her, had killed many people. Therefore, this news is qualified as a news item with an exaggerated headline. This news reached 145,678 potential readers, and generated 35,878 interactions of which 32,686 likes, 2,895 comments and 1,315 shares, and was reproduced on 5 other Serbian-language online portals.



RUSIJA JE NAJSTRAŠNIJE PONIZILA LAŽNU DRŽAVU KOSOVO U UJEDINJENIM NACIJAMA! Ana je očitala LEKCIJU Prištini kakvu nije niko do sada

21.04.2022.

17.04.2022. 11.000. 17.04.2022.

Article titled: *“Dangerous madness! Britain arms the Albanians for war: Johnson delivered weapons to the fake state of Kosovo, the same arms sent to Ukraine”*, is a news item produced by Serbian online portals. This news item is fake, since the United Kingdom Embassy in Kosovo called such reports fake news of the Serbian-language media, that a



OPASNO LUDILO! BRITANIJA NAORUŽAVA ŠIPTARE ZA RAT! Džonson lažnoj državi Kosovo isporučio oružje koje šalje i Ukrajini!?!

British military plane which landed a few days ago at Pristina Airport was carrying weapons. This news items reached 19,919 potential readers, and generated 211 interactions, of which 32,686 likes, 2,895 comments and 1,315 shares, and was reproduced on 3 other Serbian-language online portals.

Article titled: *“Spain recognizes the fake state of Kosovo?! The opening of an office in Pristina, Madrid has just hit Serbia hard”*, is a news item that was published in Serbian online portals, in which both the headline and content are fake, since Spain has not yet recognized the independence of Kosovo, and has not opened an office in Pristina. This news item had reached 15,080 potential readers, it had 257 interactions in social networks, of which 140 likes, 116 comments and 1 share.



PHOTO: HAPPY BY ©2016 HAPPY BY

ŠPANIJA PRIZNALA LAŽNU DRŽAVU KOSOVO?! Otvara kancelariju u Prištini, Madrid je upravo udario jak šamar Srbiji

Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue

The analysis of articles on the Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue category was monitored in the Serbian language sample, and for the three months of news item analysis within this category, D4D found that 64 articles had information disorders. The news items that have dominated this category included those containing hate speech, offensive language and fake news. In the monitoring of such news items, it is worth noting that the prime minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, has been attacked most often. The news items originating from the political statements by officials of the Government of Serbia, which contain half-truths, and which incited ethnic divisions in Kosovo, have mostly dominated. Most of such items were news items that are a continuation of previous articles with the aim of cementing them to the readers in Kosovo and Serbia. Often, the news items related to the implementation of the agreements signed in Brussels were taken out of context, thus undermining the importance of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue. The vast majority of narratives in the Serbian language

sample aimed to instill fear by hyperbolizing the situation in northern Kosovo. In some cases, the actions of the Kosovo police in the north were compared to “Oluja (Storm)” that took place in the war in Croatia.

Examples from the Albanian language sample

The article with the title, *“Petkovic reacts: Albin Kurti threatened with war and revenge, the international representatives are silent”*, is a news item produced based on the statement of the Director of the Office for Kosovo in the Government of Serbia, Petar Petkovic. The latter reacted to the decision of the Government of Kosovo on the reciprocity towards

the citizens of Serbia, involving identity cards. Petkovic's statement that the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, has threatened with war and revenge is not true, since in a meeting held on 29 June, the Government of Kosovo decided that every citizen of Serbia who enters Kosovo with a Serbian identity card must be provided, at the border point, with a declaration sheet, which temporarily replaces the identity card, the same as Serbia does with the citizens of Kosovo. This article was potentially read by 50,611 readers and had 1,389 interactions, including 937 likes, 451 comments and one share.



Petar Petković - Foto: REL/ Zyrë për Kosovën

Reagon Petković: Albin Kurti kërcënoi me luftë dhe hakmarrje, përfaqësuesit ndërkombëtarë heshtin

The article titled: *“Vucic goes further than Petkovic, says that Pristina is planning an attack in the north until October 1”*, is a news item based on the statement of the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, who said that Pristina is planning an attack in the north, respectively in Mitrovica, until October 1. Online portals, however, failed to

highlight this statement as biased and untrue. This statement by President Vučić comes after the decision of the Government of Kosovo, regarding the possibility of registering cars currently with license plates of cities in Kosovo - issued by the authorities of Serbia - with RKS plates (Republic of Kosovo), therefore Vučić's statement can be considered biased and not true, since the Government of Kosovo only made a decision regarding the car license plates, and had not planned for an attack. This news item had potentially reached 18,020 potential readers, it had 257 interactions in social networks, of which 369 likes, 66 comments and 3 shares.

The article titled, *“Selakovic to Kurti: The little Hitler of the Balkans, who dreams of conquering the north of Kosovo”*, is an article that quotes the statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Nikola Selakovic. He called the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, the little Hitler of the Balkans, in a negative connotation, calling



Foto: REL/RFE

Vučić shkon më larg se Petkoviqi, thotë se Prishtina po planifikon sulm në veri deri më 1 tetor



Selakoviqi për Kurtin: Hitleri i vogël ballkanik që ëndërron ta pushtojë veriun e Kosovës

him also a liar. Therefore, this news item, based on the qualification, contains information disorders and hate speech. This news item had reached 13,953 potential readers, it had 666 interactions, including 307 likes, 351 comments and 1 share.

Examples from the Serbian language sample

The article titled *"An overall strike is planned in the north of Kosovo, their goal is a new "Storm",*" is a news item that sparked many debates in Serbian politics. This news item was produced from the statement of the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, made at a conference held after the decision of the Government of Kosovo to re-register the Serbian license plates until the end of September. He alludes that

by October 1 at the latest, Kosovo is planning a general attack in the north of Kosovo, and goes on to say that Serbia is always ready for dialogue, while others have never been ready, but they have enjoyed the support of the Western powers. He added that he is asking the Kosovo authorities "not to attack the Serbian people" and that Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti "dreams of being" in the position of Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky. Therefore, this news item may be considered untrue and fake, because the Government of Kosovo has not issued such warnings, but it took a decision on reciprocity when it comes to car license plates. This news items reached 1,119,258 potential readers, and generated 25.834 interactions, of which 13,404 likes, 11,426 comments and 1,004 shares, while it was reproduced on 13 other Serbian online portals.

Vučić: Planiraju opšti napad na sever Kosova, cilj im je nova „Oluja“

VESTI | Autor: NI Beograd, Stefan Mijus | 29. jun. 2022 19:56 - 30. jun. 2022 11:50 | 662 komentara

Photo:     



The article titled: “A massacre is being prepared against the Serbs in Kosovo?” Experts: We have a plan, we will not stay in Belgrade and watch how our women are raped and our children killed”, is a statement taken out of a televised debate by some Serbian commentators. This statement came after the decision of the Government of Kosovo on the reciprocity of license plates, during a televised debate in Serbia, where analysts claim that with the decision of the Government of Kosovo on reciprocity, a massacre is being prepared against the Serbs. Taking this statement, it may be said that it is untrue and exaggerated news. This news item had reached 47,491 potential readers, it had 769 interactions, of which 336 likes, 380 comments and 53 shares.

The article titled: “Vucic: The Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija are under a strong attack - they either want to take them out, or force them to accept independence”, is a news item produced by extracting portions from the statements of the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, made after the decision of the Government of Kosovo to implement the Brussels agreement on reciprocity. He



USLANJE
SPREMA SE POGROM SRBA NA KOSOVU?!
 Stručnjaci: Imamo PLAN, nećemo sedeti u Beogradu i gledati kako nam SILUJU ŽENE i UBIJAJU DECU



said “Our people in Kosovo and Metohija, and especially those in the north, are experiencing economic and political blows, and every other kinds of blows, that are getting stronger day by day”, adding that they want to use the Ukrainian case to expel the Serbs, or force them to accept what is impossible. Therefore, this news item can be described as a news item containing exaggerated language, and biased-language news. This news item had reached 21,232 potential readers, it had 968 interactions, of which 661 likes, 295 comments and 12 shares.

Misogyny and online violence against women

Throughout this period, there were more articles and posts that attacked women, compared to the previous period. Mostly the news with offensive language, hate speech and sexist statements against women in politics dominated. More specifically, the most attacked included the President of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani, the Minister of Justice, Albulena Haxhiu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Donika Gërvalla, and Kosovo Assembly MPs Mimoza Kusari-Lila, Ganimete Musliu, Blerta Deliu-Kodra, Ardiana Matoshi, Fatmire Mulhaxha Kollçaku.

During its monitoring, D4D found 17 articles with information disorders in the Albanian language sample, while during the analysis and monitoring of portals and social media in the Serbian language sample, no news with information disorders were encountered. Below are examples that have had the most potential readers and the most impact on the public.

D4D went even a step further and analyzed the comments on Facebook, to see the reactions of citizens. Thus, 729 comments on Facebook were analyzed, on questions posed to the public by online portals, regarding their opinion on women in politics. Out of 729 analyzed comments, it was found that most of the comments on women were positive. Around 74 percent of those who left comments, had a positive opinion on women in politics (see Figure 5). However, a

significant number of them have had offensive approaches towards women or political disagreements with them. Nonetheless, most of negative comments related to women's appearance, with heavy insults, hate speech, and sexist language. That said, 15 percent of those leaving comments, used such a language, while 11 percent of comments provided harsh political objections against women. This includes disagreements about their mandate – often implying that they lack the political ability and do not deserve a seat in parliament, some openly expressing their opposition on political or party grounds. In terms of the structure of people leaving comments, 77 out of a total of 176 thereof included women. Hence, 43 percent, or almost half of the negative or critical comments about women in politics came from women themselves (see Figure 6)

Figure 4. Facebook comments by category. Source: D4D calculations

Online comments against women in politics

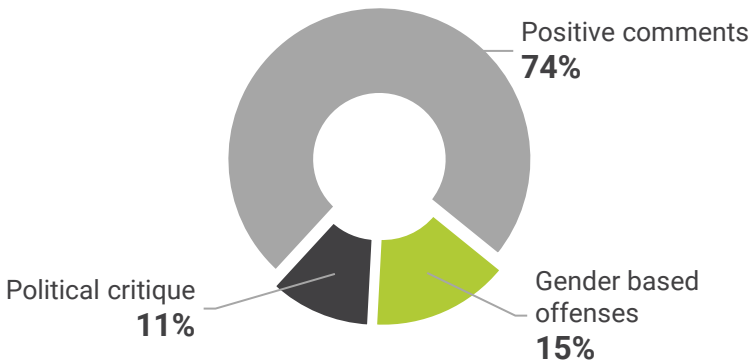
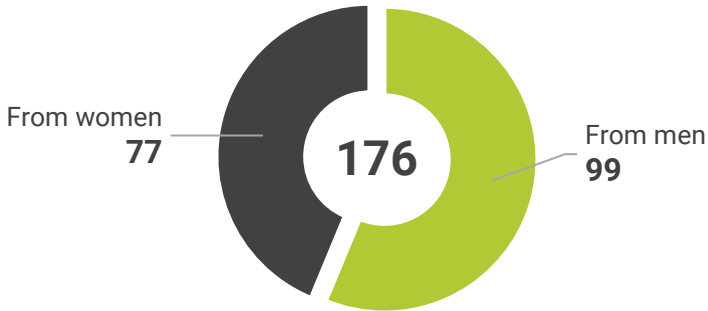


Figure 1. Facebook comments by commenter's gender. Source: D4D calculations

Gender based negative comments



Examples from the Albanian language sample

Article titled: “Baton Haxhiu: *The Eternal Spokeswoman of the Power, also spoke about her underwear*”, is a news item that was produced by an opinion piece written by the Kosovan journalist, Baton Haxhiu. In his opinion, Haxhiu used sexist and misogynistic language towards the MP, Mimoza Kusari Lila, prejudicing her and expressing offensive

Baton Haxhiu: Zëdhënësja e Përjetshme e Pushtetit, fliste edhe për të brendshmet e saj

3 weeks ago

5 minutes read



language against her, describing *her* as *weak* and *blind*, as well as commenting on her statements about clothing. Moreover, he calls her political party journey as “her successive marriages”. This article has potentially reached 1,968 readers and has had 382 interactions including 318 likes, 57 comments as well as 7 shares.

Political divisions and harsh language

Political divisions by the use of harsh language, baseless criticism, untrue narratives continued in this period as well. They were based on the main events that have occurred during this period, and were encouraged by both journalists, but also politicians themselves. Unlike previous periods, the political confrontations have also culminated in the private aspect. A status made on Facebook years ago, in which Minister Hekuran Murati had seriously offended the Kosovo Liberation Army, became an arena of fierce political confrontations. This led to Dardan Molliqaj from PSD to disclose private information on the Minister, making a public appeal to the citizens to use this information to demand his resignation.

Moreover, harsh language, often with vulgar vocabulary, continues to be present in the public discourses of politicians, while on the other hand, journalists have often failed to condemn the use of this language when reporting on these statements.

Some journalists have posted their biased writings on their social media platforms criticizing certain politicians and the Prime Minister of Kosovo for not fulfilling their promises, and attributing some failures that are not directly related to the government, to him.

Examples from the Albanian language sample

Article with a headline: *“Escalation of Abelard Tahiri from “shut your mouth” to Albulena Haxhiu, to “motherfu***”,* is a news item produced on the basis of a statement of the MP Abelard Tahiri, who is the the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) Caucus Whip. In a parliamentary session invoked for the dismissal of Martin Berishaj, Kosovo Ambassador to Croatia, he was involved in a debate with the Minister of Justice, Albulena Haxhiu. During the debate, Tahiri was also heard

telling Minister Haxhiu to “shut up”, while during the speech, he had forgotten to turn off the microphone, and was heard cursing, an insult directed at the Caucus of the Vetëvendosje Movement (LVV). Therefore, this statement by MP Tahiri contains offensive and hateful language towards women, in this case Minister Haxhiu. This news item had reached 2,473 potential readers, and had 82 interactions in social networks, of which 32 likes, 44 comments and 6 shares.

Nga “mbylle gojën”, Albulena Haxhiut deri në “a jau q*** robt”, si eskaloj Abelard Tahiri



Article with a headline: *“Requested a correction of the territory in Çakorr, Haradinaj receives a harsh reaction: This is political prostitution!”*, is an article that quotes the statement of professor Sulejman Mehazi, who called the request of the Member of Assembly of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, for the correction of the Kosovo - Montenegro border, as “political prostitution”. Therefore, this statement can be described as an information disorder since it used very harsh and vulgar language against MP Haradinaj. This news item had reached 54,359 potential readers, it gained 1.066 interactions, including 428 likes, 582 comments and 56 shares.

Kërkoj korrjigjim të territorit në Çakorr, Haradinajt i vjen një reagim i ashpër: Kjo është kurvëri politike!

NGA: A.M. ME: 5 PRILL 2022 NE ORA: 22:52



There was a status post from 2016 on Facebook, by the Minister of Finance, Hekuran Murati, which resurfaced once again by online portals in Kosovo. Murati's status contains harsh language deeply criticizing the commitment of the people of Kosovo to freedom. This is because, by this status post, Murati made a comparison between KLA soldiers and mercenaries, completely relativizing the contribution

of the former. This article was shared on at least three other portals and generated a lot of reactions on social networks, reaching 27,300 potential readers, and 2,342 interactions, of which 320 harsh reactions, 1,268 comments, 604 likes and 150 shares on social networks.

Murati në 2016 për veteranët: Me pas angazhu mercenar na kish dal ma lirë lufta, as faleminderit s'kishim pas nevojë me iu thanë

26/06/2022 | 19:20



Examples from the Serbian language sample

Article titled: *"The fake state of Kosovo just received the strongest blow! Pristina did not want to hear these words ever"*, is news that was produced after the meeting between Riyad al-Maliki, the Foreign Minister of Palestine and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, Donika Gërvalla. After this meeting, online portals called Kosovo

a fake state, while based on this headline, this news can be qualified



LAŽNA DRŽAVA KOSOVO JE UPRAVO DOBILA NAJJAČI ŠAMAR! Ove reči Pristina nikako nije želela da čuje

as fake, as Kosovo has been an independent state since 2008. This article reached 65,433 potential readers, it had 2,318 interactions in social networks of which 1510 likes, 716 comments and 92 shares and was reproduced in 2 other online portals.

Special Court

In the Albanian language sample, there were unverified narratives, such as the case of Baton Haxhiu, allegedly an associate of the State Security Chief, Jovica Stanišić, and the narrative that Hashim Thaci and Skënder Hyseni belong to the world of crime.

Narratives in the Serbian language sample contained disinformation. They ranged from reporting on false statements by Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs about organ and arms trafficking, according to which the West had given its blessing for this trafficking to flourish. The other false narrative provided that KLA war used to be funded by the sale of Serb organs, to the conspiracy about the murder of the Swiss rapporteur at the Council of Europe, Dick Marty.

Examples from the Albanian language sample

The news article entitled, *"Hyseni and Thaçi belong to the world of crime / Analyst from U.S: Maybe Skënderi knows why Hashim is in prison?"*, is a news item that was produced in a post by analyst Binak Maxharraj, who calls Skender Hyseni and Hashim Thaçi as people who belong to the world of crime. This designation of Hyseni and Thaçi contains information disorder, and is qualified as an unfounded statement,

"Hyseni së bashku me Thaçin i përkasin botës së krimin"/ Analisti nga Amerika: Ndoshta Skënderi e di pse Hashimi është në burg!?"



since it is not based on data, and since the Special Court has not yet given its final judgment on it, this is precisely the reason why this news can be qualified as the one containing hate speech against Hyseni and Thaçi. This article reached 13,635 potential readers, and generated 709 interactions on social networks, of which 523 likes, 136 comments and 50 shares.

Examples from the Serbian language sample

The article titled, "Albanian lobby plotting the murder of Dick Marty to be attributed to Serbian services: Scandalous action in Switzerland, the security information agency also reacted", is a news that came out after an interview given by Dick Marty to a Swiss media, where Marty claimed that he had been under high police protection for 16



**ALBANSKI LOBI SRPSKIM SLUŽBAMA
PAKUJE UBISTVO DIKA MARTIJA:
Skandalozna akcija u Švajcarskoj,
reagovala i BIA!**

months, due to threats against his life, which, as he said, came from "certain circles of the Serbian secret services", which, according to him, "requested mercenaries from underground to execute him", in order to blame Kosovo Albanians instead. Hence, this news can be qualified as news with an exaggerated headline and news with fake content. This news item reached 12,622 potential readers, it had 322 interactions, 147 likes, 135 comments and 39 shares and was reproduced in 2 other online portals in Serbian language.

The article with the title, *“You bombed Yugoslavia and monitored organs trafficking in Kosovo!” Zakharova brutally silences the Brits!*, is the news item produced from the statement of Maria Zakharova, spokeswoman of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reacting to the statement of the UK Minister of Foreign Affairs, Liz Truss, who during her visit to the Balkans, spoke about Russia's disastrous influence over the Balkans.

In her reaction, Zakharova also mentioned Kosovo, saying that London oversaw the trafficking of organs in Kosovo and Metohija including the smuggling of many items in the region, including smuggling of arms. Therefore, this statement can be considered as fake news, considering there is no proof or court judgment supporting it. This news reached 297,572 potential readers, and generated 18,398 interactions, of which 1.6101 likes, 1.349 comments and 948 shares.



The article titled, *“The Yellow House: How was the terrorist KLA funded by the sale of organs of Serbs kidnapped in Kosovo?”*, is a news item published on the Serbian online portal 'Kurir'. The content of the news relates to an announcement of a debate to be held, where the Kosovo Liberation Army would be discussed, saying that KLA crimes were committed on



ethnic basis by performing organ transplants in a yellow house in Albania, based on a report of former Senator, Dick Marty. However, this news can be qualified as news with information disorder, since all these claims have yet to be verified. This news reached 21,200 potential readers, and generated 22 interactions, and was also reproduced by 2 other online portals in Serbian language.

4 | Conclusions

Although throughout this period (Q3) the number of readers has decreased by more than one million, it still remains quite high compared to Q1 period, as the first report after last year's local elections (see Figure 7). This time around, in contrast to the previous period, there were much more potential readers in the sample in the Serbian language than in the Albanian language one. This is due to the high presence of news related to the situation in the north of Kosovo and exaggerated and fake news on online portals in Serbia, which were then reflected in Kosovo.

Figure 5. Total potential readers of articles and posts with information disorders.
Source: D4D calculations

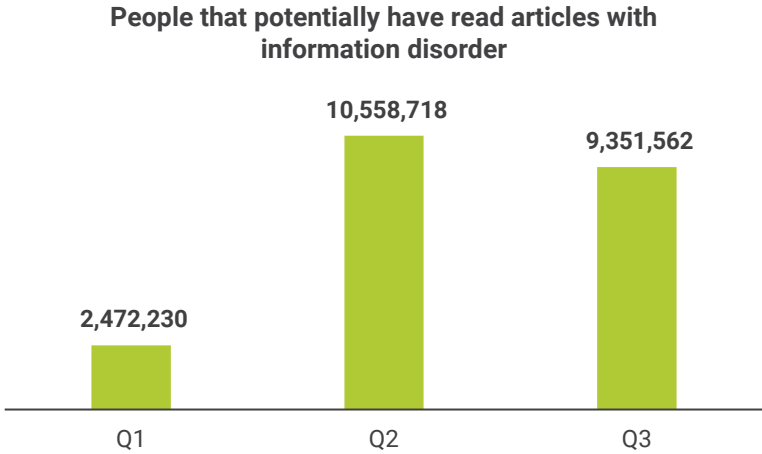
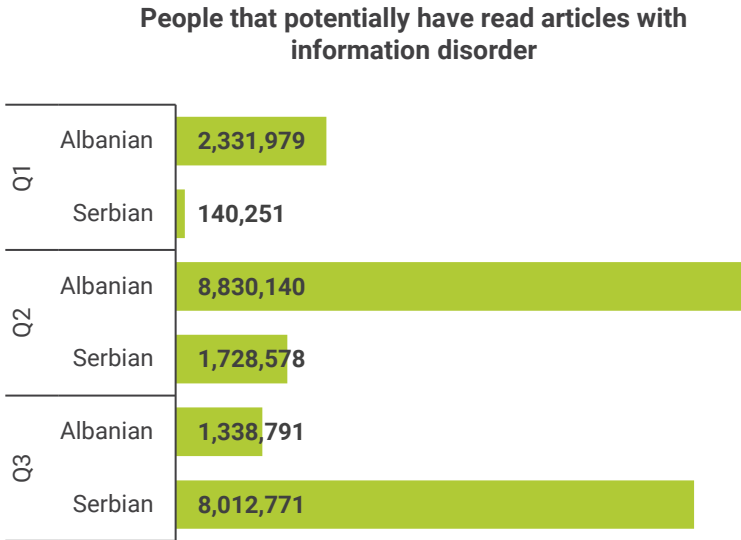


Figure 6. Total potential readers of articles and posts with information disorders, by sample



During the April - June monitoring period, while analyzing the articles with information disorders, the presence of news related to political divisions and harsh language, external influence, war in Ukraine and its wrong portrayal in some cases, were observed in news portals in Kosovo and Serbia.

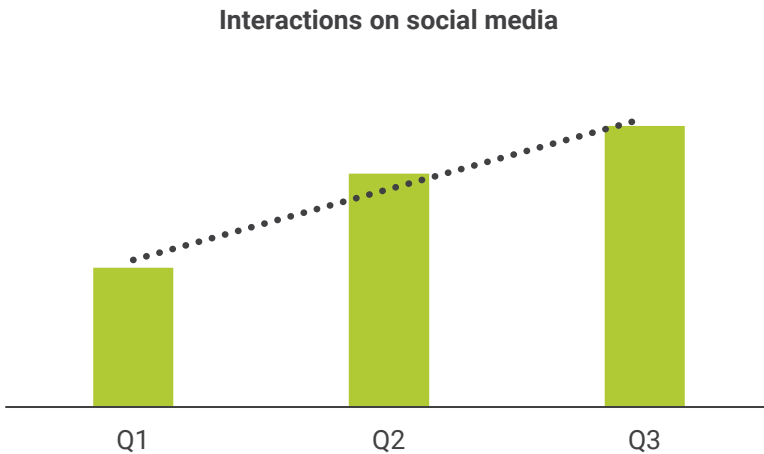
Moreover, an important component in the category of external influence includes the ability of disinformation to incite hatred and political divisions in Kosovo. In both samples, with special emphasis on the sample in the Serbian language, an attempt was made to make an unfair connection between the Russian aggression in Ukraine and the NATO intervention in Kosovo, and to deeply distort the facts about the actions of Kosovo Government in the north. These have seriously damaged the communication between the two governments in Kosovo-Serbia dialogue. False narratives about the involvement of volunteers from Kosovo in the war in Ukraine still prevail, a narrative

that was also present in the Q2 report, and false narratives that Britain was involved in the transport of arms to Kosovo.

In terms of political divisions in Kosovo, the main topic continues to involve the use of harsh language, hatred and mutual insults between politicians, analysts and MPs - often using even banal words. Facts taken out of context have made these accusations against each other incite divisions among the people, based on the data analyzed in this report, more precisely based on people's interactions on social networks. As seen in Figure 9, the number of interactions from the online audience is increasing. Interactions increased by 20 percent compared to the previous report (Q2).

In terms of harsh and offensive language towards women, D4D found a significant number of online comments on Facebook. Out of 729 comments analyzed, D4D found that 176 were negative or more than 25 percent of them included negative comments against women. It is worth noting that almost half of the negative comments on women come from women themselves.

Figure 7. Social network interactions among online audience, by time periods. Source: D4D calculations



An important aspect includes the increase in the number of articles and posts with false content throughout this period. This goes on to

show that particular events are associated with an increase in these news items. For instance, the case of Kosovo's actions in the implementation of reciprocity has caused flood of fake news. This is also witnessed by the number of potential readers and their online reactions, especially in the Serbian language sample (see Figure 8). In this period, there were more articles and social media posts than in the previous two periods combined or 237. In the last two periods, there was a total of 215. Moreover, this is also evidenced by the number of fake news in the Serbian language sample throughout this period. This sample includes more articles and posts with fake content than the other two periods (Q1 and Q2) combined. In addition, for the first time ever, it is higher than in the Albanian one.

5 | Recommendations

It is important that media inform fairly and contribute to the integrity of the elections but also to the political situation in the country overall. On the other hand, political parties and their representatives should also choose the language of communication and avoid using offensive terms.

Recommendations to media

Verify all facts before publishing the news - especially those that are republished and those related to the news coming from foreign news agencies;

Do not promote political divisions and hate speech;

Report carefully and responsibly on misogyny;

Implement the practice of gender sensitive reporting;

When reporting on sexist language and hate speech, disclose them as such;

Filter comments on social media, removing those that contain hate speech and sexist language

Refrain from using exaggerated headlines aimed at serving as clickbaits;

All articles sponsored in the print media should contain a note that they are sponsored by a political entity or the candidate of the political entity;

The media should make it clear and condemn any offensive language against women in politics;

News portals should verify the facts and not fall prey to deceptions of foreign media - especially those coming from Russia and its allies;

News portals should engage in quoting the reports of the special court and not create exaggerated headlines;

Online portals as well as other types of media (TV, newspapers, radio), should use ways to filter comments in the news they share on their social media accounts, that contain hate speech, sexist and offensive language.

Put the name of the author/journalist who wrote the news, if not possible, then at least the initials of the author/journalist, in order to identify the portal that copies the news from non-quoted sources

Recommendations to Political Entities

Do not promote political divisions, which incite hatred among citizens;

Do not use sexist language against women;

Political parties and political leaders must refrain from harsh, hate and misogynistic language;

Political parties and political leaders should not be involved in disinformation campaigns;

Political parties must disclose campaign expenditures publicly on social media;

Political parties should draft internal regulations on cases in which disciplinary measures should be taken against its members involved in disinformation campaigns.

Recommendations to citizens

Check and verify, the source of information, author, date of publication and portal link;

Verify the veracity of the news before sharing it on social media;

Read the articles in their entirety and do not distribute information based solely on the headlines of the articles;

Refrain from hate speech and sexist language in comments on social networks;

Persons affected by defamation and insults of various natures should report them to Kosovo Press Council.

6 | Annexes

Definitions of terminology about information disorders

Term	Definition
Information disorders	Information disorders are intentional or unintentional dissemination and publication of untrue, manipulated, exaggerated information or information containing harsh, sexist and hate speech.
Potential reach	Potential reach means how many people have potentially read the article from articles on online portals. The data for each item were generated from the platforms with which we did the monitoring.
Interactions	Interactions involve all the actions of readers in relation to a post on Facebook or Twitter, which includes likes, comments, article sharing or other reactions like happy, sad, nervous and surprised.
Disinformation	Unverifiable, false or misleading information, created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to mislead the public internationally, which may cause public harm, threats to democratic political and policy-making processes, and the public good.

Hate speech	Abusive or threatening speech or writing that expresses prejudice against a particular group
Misogyny	Hatred, disgust or prejudice against women
Online violence	Use of digital devices or services online to engage in activities that result in physical, psychological, or emotional self-harm or harm to another person.
Exaggerated headlines	Title created to make readers want to click on a hyperlink, especially when the link leads to content of dubious value or interest.

Acronyms

AAK	Alliance for the Future of Kosovo
AKR	New Kosovo Alliance
D4D	Democracy for Development Institute
KSF	Kosovo Security Forces
LDK	Democratic League of Kosovo
LVV	Self-Determination Movement
PDK	Democratic Party of Kosovo
ROSU	Kosovo Police Special Operations Unit
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
USA	United States of America

Katalogimi në botim – (CIP)

Biblioteka Kombëtare e Kosovës “Pjetër Bogdani”

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659(496.51)(047)

Information Disorder: its impact on the information of citizens / paper prepared by Instituti Demokraci për Zhvillim. - Prishtinë : Instituti Demokraci për Zhvillim, 2022. - 44 f. : ilustr. ; 28 cm.

Masmedia -- Informacion elektronik -- Raporte

ISBN 978-9951-823-35-7

Aleph [000103763]

Democracy for Development (D4D) Institute was established in April 2010 by a group of analysts who were increasingly worried that the state-building exercise had neglected democracy. D4D's vision is to promote an active and educated citizenry that participates fully in the public space and utilizes the public arena of representation and decision-making to deliberate and build consensus over resource allocation that is efficient, smart, long-term, and that brings about equitable development. D4D influences specific policy, promotes a cross-sectorial approach to problem solving, and tackles the institutional routine of decision making by recommending incremental improvements and operates with maximum effectiveness in order to fully promote Kosovo's stabilization and democratic development. For more information on D4D activities, please visit our website: www.d4d-ks.org

