

Identifying fake news communities and sourcing it live

February 1st, 2018 – Due to the rising threat of fake news and disinformation, the EU DisinfoLab aims at creating an efficient stakeholder network to benefit from our new project for the 2018 Italian general election.

Fake news: a global danger for democracy

50.000 bots. This is the number of fake accounts which were activated on Twitter during the U.S. 2016 election period to mud the waters of the public debate. From the results of UK's Brexit referendum to the election of U.S. President Donald Trump, conducted under suspicion of foreign meddling, to the fake media leaks during the run-up to the French presidential election, the disruptive power of disinformation is now more than evident, identified as one of the main threats to open societies.

Last year, we conducted our pilot project aiming to monitor and detect disinformation in social media during the French presidential election period. Our team of experts, lead by Nicolas Vanderbiest, was able to detect and source numerous instances of fake news, mostly concerning Emmanuel Macron.

The instant, live debunking of the infamous *#MacronLeaks*, just 90 minutes before the electoral silence started, was our most notable success, quoted by media worldwide.

Following that success, the EU DisinfoLab has been established, gathering top European experts to join the fight against disinformation and arming them with innovative technological solutions.

Fighting fake news during elections: the case of Italy

After battle-testing our methodology within the context of the French elections, the EU DisinfoLab's latest project focuses on Italy, which will hold its general election on the 4th of March.

Our goal is to bring our community monitoring and fake news sourcing methodology to the Italian landscape, aided by a network of top European disinformation experts and Italian journalists. The project aims to monitor the Italian social media sphere (mainly Twitter) for disinformation, fake news and any sign of foreign influence.

Is there Russian influence in the context of Italian elections? What are the main false narratives spread in Italy? Will we observe electoral disruption operations like it happened with #MacronLeaks?

This is what we are trying to find out, with the aim to prevent the spread of disinformation and any attempts at foreign influence in real time.

In a nutshell, what we aim to do is:

- Identify the communities spreading disinformation in Italy;
- "Source" fake news - measure and analyse how it spreads and track it back to its source.

What we hope to create with you today is a strong and effective network of Italian stakeholders who are involved in the fight against disinformation, to be more efficient in our analysis and to reach better visibility in Italy. Therefore, your role in this process is extremely important.

Let's collaborate!

What is the EU DisinfoLab?

The EU DisinfoLab is an international NGO gathering top European experts in fighting disinformation. We also bring a new tool to the fight - our own methodology of social network analysis, letting us map suspicious online communities and source fake news. Follow us on social media and join our fight!