

EU DISINFO LAB

Disinformation landscape in SLOVENIA

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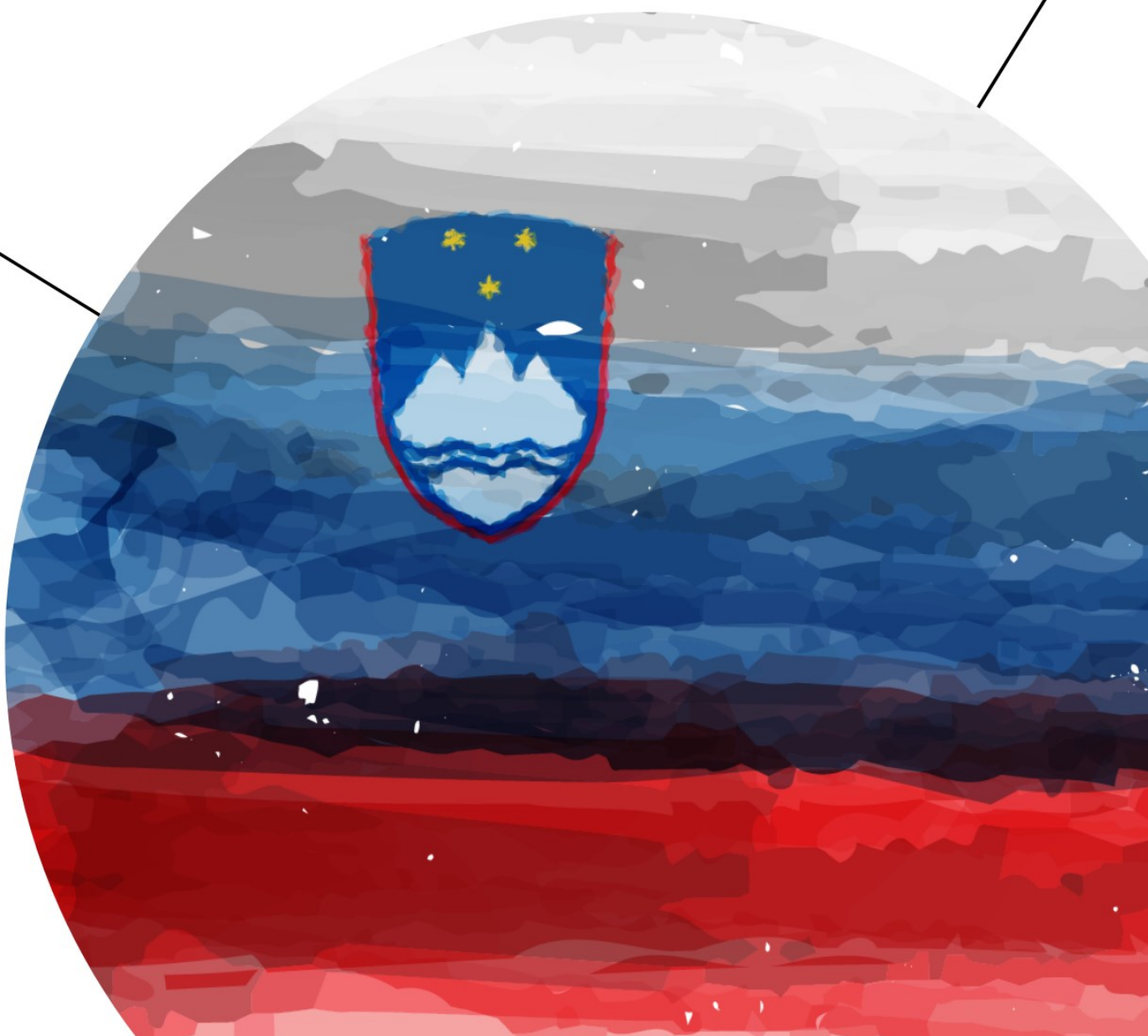


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INTRODUCTION

- The disinformation landscape in Slovenia is marked by using peoples' fear and feelings of inequality, changing it into distrust and hate towards marginalised minorities and exploiting it for political or economic interests. Common examples of disinformation practices are selling “alternative medicine” to vulnerable patients, attempts to deprive migrants of their rights or tightening the welfare state based on false information.
- In many cases, disinformative narratives are building on legitimate fears and real events but presenting them in misleading context or with false or inaccurate information.
- While most health and climate change-related disinformation primarily comes from civil society groups and activists, who have their agenda and often also economic interests in mind, disinformation attacks against minorities and human rights, such as anti-migrant fake stories, are primarily spread by right-wing politicians and their media channels.

EMBLEMATIC CASES

Several cases of disinformation permeated Slovenian's public opinion to this day.

WOMAN RAPED BY MIGRANTS

- In the spring of 2024, commercial but partly politically led TV station PlanetTV [published](#) "news" claiming that a young woman was raped in Tivoli Park in the capital city of Ljubljana by three migrants. Other media widely reshared the story and it gained a large number of views and reshares, with the addition of hate speech against migrants.
- Police [confirmed](#) that they received a report of a suspected crime against sexual integrity on the same day the rape supposedly happened. Still, after investigating the circumstances they claimed that there was no rape committed in Tivoli Park and that, according to available information, no foreigners were involved in the incident.
- Even though the police denied the false information, the story was [used](#) in the Slovenian parliament by Mr Andrej Kosi, a member of the far-right political party SDS. The alleged rape was also stated as a reason for the recent formation of a neo-nazi group named Slovenska obrambna straža (Slovenian homeland guard), which is calling for remigration. The group's members have at least once attacked a migrant in the street while claiming they are taking care of the safety of Slovenians.

HUMANS DO NOT CONTRIBUTE TO THE RISE OF CO2

- For more than two years, the claim that humans do not contribute to the rise of CO2 in the atmosphere has been used in various forms in the Slovenian public sphere to undermine the need for action to reduce climate change or to make it seem meaningless. Some actors even use the statement to deny climate change altogether.
- The statement, which was proven to be false multiple times by Razkrinkavanje.si, was mostly spreading through social media like Facebook and YouTube, by the Slovenian branch of multinational civil society group with signs of being a cult [Creative Society](#), by conspiracy theorist web portal [Triglav media](#) and also by the president of pro-Russian anti-vaccination political party, [Resni.ca](#).

COVID-19 VACCINE IS ALTERING OUR GENES THERAPY

- At the beginning of 2021, shortly after the first mRNA COVID-19 vaccine was first introduced, a video of a bioresonance therapist was published, claiming that COVID-19 [vaccine is gene therapy](#). The video and the claim itself went viral through YouTube and Facebook, where it was first shared in large groups with mostly anti-vax and COVID-sceptic content but managed to gain popularity in the general public as well.
- It was one of many different statements about "dangerous and secret" side effects of vaccines, such as them causing [death](#), [infertility](#) and [abortions](#), popularised during COVID-19 pandemic. Such claims are still an important part of a wider disinformation network of health conspiracies in Slovenia.

NARRATIVES

This section illustrates the most recurrent narratives in the Slovenian disinformation landscape.

MIGRATION AS A DANGER

- The immigrant narrative has been prevalent in Slovenia since at least 2015 and it is regularly fueled by disinformation. Right-wing politicians and their media often spread this type of disinformation, which is then readily embraced by ordinary individuals who, in turn, scapegoat migrants and their access to social welfare for their socio-economic challenges.
- Within the anti-migrant discourse, the narrative that migrants pose a threat to Slovenians is particularly pervasive. This includes false [claims](#) that migrants receive 850 euros in pocket money upon entering the country, a [lie](#) that they are required to seek asylum in the first safe country, and [manipulative claims](#) that migrants arriving in groups do not have the right to individual legal treatment.
- Migrants were also falsely blamed for spreading COVID-19 (see examples [here](#) and [here](#)) and [other](#) infectious diseases. In the past year, the narrative of migrants posing a danger intensified and shifted to multiple fake or manipulative stories about them [physically attacking](#) and raping Slovenians. In addition to the fake story of rape supposedly committed by migrants in Tivoli Park which was upgraded by an official debate in the Slovenian parliament, the same arc spanning from the quick spread of the news from social media to the parliament and then being proven as fabricated or manipulative, can be observed in fake story about a migrant attacking a 10-year old girl on a bus or manipulative statistics supposedly showing that number of rapes committed by migrants [grew by 170 %](#)

CLIMATE CHANGE DENIAL AND CLIMATE ACTION OPPOSITION

- The claim that humans do not contribute to rising atmospheric CO2 levels is part of a wider narrative of climate change denial and resistance to climate action in Slovenia. The motivations for opposing climate action are different, ranging from beliefs like “there is no need for action” and “humans cannot change anything” to the [notion](#) that “it’s merely an elite plot to impoverish us further”. While the first two are mostly shared by individuals and [civil society groups](#), the latter is also echoed by some politicians; directly or indirectly.

OFFICIAL MEDICINE AS EVIL

- Disinformation about health, often portraying official medicine as harmful, corrupted and malicious has been prevalent in Slovenia for decades but it gained popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly as restrictive measures such as curfew, movement limitations and near-mandatory vaccinations were imposed. A combination of health-related disinformation - spreading false claims about [masks](#), vaccine [safety](#) and [efficiency](#) - combined with questionable or even [unlawful](#) political decisions, led a substantial and diverse segment of the public to reject official medical practices, especially vaccinations.
- Even after the pandemic, [vaccination levels](#) among children have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. In addition to disinformation surrounding the safety and efficacy of official medicine, there are also many cases of companies selling dubious dietary supplements or fake medicines that claim to treat health conditions, such as [fungi](#), [parasites](#) or [hearing loss](#). While some purveyors of these products use disinformation to sell their wares, others leverage misleading narratives about official medicine to foster [distrust](#) about medicine and lure potential customers away from official medicine toward alternative health options.

DISINFORMATION TO CAST DOUBT ON THE LEGITIMACY OF ELECTIONS

- During election periods in Slovenia, disinformation campaigns often aim to undermine the legitimacy of the electoral process. They are often shared by political parties that have lost or failed to secure the expected number of votes, or regardless of the results by people and entities connected to the far-right SDS party. For instance, on June 9, 2024, this party tweeted that a large portion of the electoral sites in the municipality of Šmarje pri Jelšah were omitted, allegedly leading to the lowest voter turnout in that constituency compared to others in the country. This information was [not true](#). In the past, the party also claimed that voters from abroad didn't receive their ballots [on time](#) and that electoral silence [does not apply](#) to ordinary citizens. Additionally, SDS member Mr Danijel Krivec shared [manipulative claims](#) that the same votes were counted multiple times.

COMMUNITY

The main actors countering disinformation in Slovenia are listed hereafter.

RAZKRINAVANJE.SI BY OŠTRO

- [Oštro](#), a centre for investigative journalism in the Adriatic region is the only signatory of the IFCN [Code of Principles](#) and the EFCSN [code of standards](#) in Slovenia. Their fact-checking project [Razkrinkavanje.si](#) has been doing fact-checking in Slovenia on a regular and continuous basis for more than five years. In addition to fact-checking, they are also doing analyses and investigations about disinformation and educating about media literacy and fact-checking.

NE/JA BY STA

- Slovenian Press Agency (STA) established a fact-checking [project NE/JA](#) in 2019, dedicated to fact-checking and myth-busting of socially relevant topics. Their aim is also to inform and raise awareness about the importance of fact-checking projects in a time when disinformation is part of the media reality.

ČASORIS

- [Časoris](#) is an open-access online newspaper for children. Their project 'Lovci na lažne novice in druge zgodbe iz sveta dezinformacij' (Hunters of fake news and other stories from the world of disinformation) is introducing children and young people to the social role of media and teaching them media literacy, especially through videos. Children learn how to distinguish between lies and truth, authentic and fake media publications as well as distinguishing between opinions and facts.

DEJSTVA BY POP TV

Commercial TV station Pop TV launched their fact-checking project [Dejstva](#) before the parliamentary elections in 2018. Since then, a group of journalists is fact-checking statements, especially claims by political candidates before elections and they are also preparing contextual stories about pressing topics.

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION OFFICE

In May 2024 before the European elections, the Government communication office launched a project called [Ustavimo dezinformacije: Preberi, premisli, preveri](#) (Let's stop disinformation: Read, rethink, check) to inform the public about disinformation.

POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

In Slovenia, there are no legal means that would specifically address the disinformation problem. Currently, the criminal code and media law don't even mention disinformation as a specific phenomenon. The [media law](#) obliges all registered media to publish “a correction” if the affected subject requests so by the law. However, in the current law the term 'correction' doesn't only mean correction of incorrect or untrue statements, but also presenting other or contrary facts and circumstances by which the affected party refutes or with the intention of refuting substantially supplements the statements in the published article.

In 2024, a new media law was drafted. It has been sent to the parliament on 31st of December, but the public and experts still have many remarks and comments, so it can be expected that changes will happen before the final adoption of the law. The latest proposed law states in the introductory part that the current law “does not limit the spreading of hate speech and disinformation” and that the state is obliged to protect citizens from harmful media practices, such as disinformation or promoting violence, intolerance and hatred.

The latest edition does not define or regulate disinformation directly. It only mentions that the “right to correction” is meant as a tool to coordinate untrue or manipulative statements made by the media. The proposal envisages regulation of the use of artificial intelligence in the media. It anticipates a requirement to label such content and to explicitly make the publisher of the content responsible for the accuracy and the lawfulness of use of AI content. In the context of deficient legislative regulation of disinformation, it is important to mention voluntary self-regulation. [Code of Journalists of Slovenia](#) states that journalists must check the accuracy of the collected information and avoid errors, and correct their errors, even if unintended. They are also obliged to separate information from commentary, and they must not withhold information that is crucial for understanding the topic in the discussion. However, this code is to be followed only voluntarily and even then, the journalistic work only gets questioned in cases, when someone starts a procedure against journalists at the [journalists' honour tribunal](#). The consequences of the judgements are mostly symbolic.

Since journalists, who are at least in theory working in line with the Code of Journalists, are not the main subjects in spreading disinformation, other kinds of regulation is still needed.

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