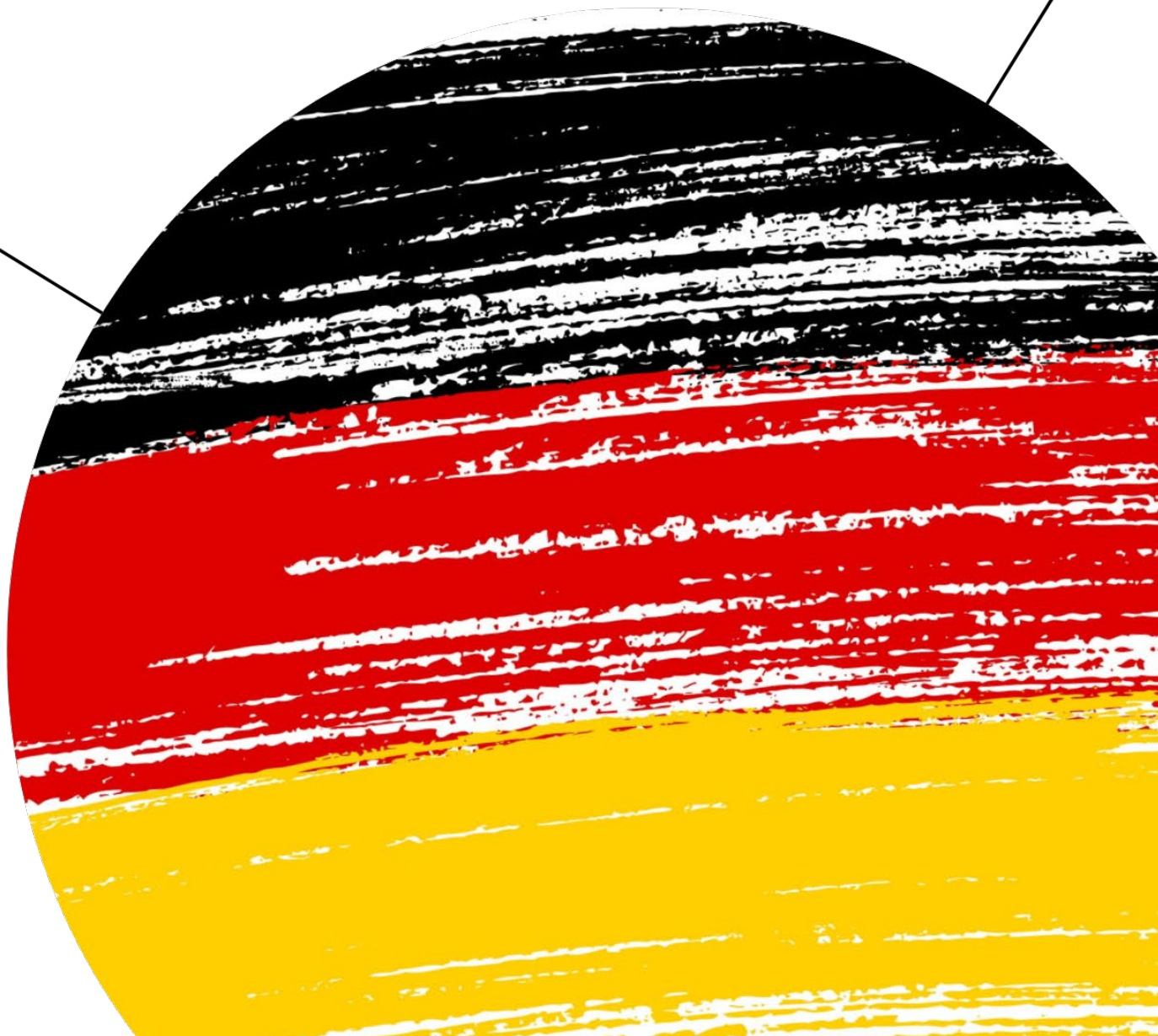
EU DISINFO LAB

Disinformation landscape in GERMANY

V2
July 2025



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This project is funded by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom.

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OVERVIEW

In February 2023, we published the first edition of the Disinformation Landscape Germany. Over the past two years, the German information environment has undergone some changes—yet many of the core challenges identified at that time remain. During this period, disinformation and broader forms of information distortion—particularly Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)—have intensified. This threat, particularly emanating from Russia, has manifested not only through disinformation but also via cyberattacks, espionage, sabotage, and coordinated propaganda campaigns. At the same time, public awareness has grown, prompting stronger responses from both governmental institutions and civil society. The issue is now more widely recognised and increasingly addressed through concrete countermeasures.

This report revisits the key challenges outlined in our previous analysis and offers an updated perspective on the current landscape.

- **FIMI as a Consolidated Threat**. What seemed to be an emerging concern some years ago has now become a persistent threat to Germany. Germany has long been a primary target of Russian propaganda, —even prior to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In recent years, this trend has only intensified, with the country remaining a focal point for FIMI. Notable Russian influence operations—such as Doppelganger and Overload—have repeatedly sought to shape German public opinion, particularly regarding the war in Ukraine. These campaigns aim to erode support for Ukraine, manipulate public discourse, and sow institutional distrust while fostering political and societal divisions. Beyond the context of the war, such operations have also exploited deeply polarising issues, including migration, gender rights, economic concerns, and electoral politics. Their objective remains consistent: to deepen social fragmentation and interfere with the functioning and trust in democratic processes.
- **Electoral Disinformation and Institutional Distrust.** In 2024 and 2025, Germany experienced an electoral cycle marked by the rise of the far-right party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) – it was the second most voted party in all but one federal state, Thuringia, where it emerged as the leading party – and intensified disinformation efforts. A wave of disinformation and conspiracy theories circulated online, while FIMI campaigns and platforms' algorithmic distortion were also flagged. Electoral disinformation and conspiracy theories joined other efforts to discredit institutions. The German wing of QAnon— known for promoting conspiracy theories — has remained active in the last years, while the so-called *Reichsbürger* movement—which denies the legitimacy of the German state and its institutions—has grown significantly in recent years and is under surveillance by the intelligence services. These developments underscore two key risks posed by disinformation: first, the erosion of the social and institutional contract that sustains democratic systems; and second, the empowerment of radical political narratives.
- **The Rise of the Far-Right.** It may seem contentious to frame the rise of a far-right party as a disinformation issue. However, in the case of Germany there are reasons to draw at least some connections. First, members of the AfD have played a significant role in promoting disinformation—especially on topics such as climate change, which will be discussed in detail later in this report. Second, leaked documents from the Russian influence agency Social Design Agency

(SDA) - known as one of the authors of influence operations such as Doppelganger- revealed that one of Russia's stated goals of its disinformation campaigns was to help the AfD reach at least 20% of the national vote. While this achievement cannot be solely attributed to foreign interference, it does raise concerns about the intersection of domestic political developments and foreign information manipulation. Moreover, some AfD members are accused of participating in Russian influence efforts: Investigations are being carried out, among others, against AfD politician Petr Bystron, who denies the accusations.

In parallel, the AfD has also received public support from members of the new U.S. administration under Donald Trump, notably Vice President J.D. Vance and Elon Musk. Musk, in particular, has been accused of leveraging his platform, X (formerly Twitter), to amplify AfD messaging and bolster the visibility of its co-leader, Alice Weidel, as documented by several investigations. Meanwhile, the designation of the AfD as a "confirmed right-wing extremist initiative" at the national level by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution in early May 2025 was temporarily suspended just days later by a court in Cologne. The final classification is still pending confirmation.

- **Migration as a Driver of Polarisation.** Migration has remained a central and polarising issue in German political discourse, playing a significant role in the rise of the far right. Amid growing tensions, mainstream parties largely converged on the need for stricter immigration policies, reflecting mounting public concern. However, the AfD escalated the debate, most notably through a highly controversial meeting in Potsdam, during which party members reportedly discussed plans for so-called "remigration", also considering German citizens with a migration background as a possible target group, according to CORRECTIV research. Disinformation has continued to amplify anti-migrant sentiment, with widespread hoaxes falsely alleging criminal behaviour by migrants or claiming they receive disproportionate social benefits. These narratives are frequently designed to stoke fear and resentment, reinforcing the far right's political agenda.
- **Climate Disinformation on the Rise.** In our first report, we identified climate disinformation as an emerging threat in Germany. In 2025, this trend has intensified, with disinformation narratives gaining traction across various sectors of society. This escalation has been influenced in part by global political shifts, notably the return of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency, which has emboldened climate-skeptical actors internationally. In Germany, the AfD has positioned itself at the forefront of climate denialism.
- **Health Disinformation**. In our previous report, we identified Germany's longstanding tradition of alternative medicine as a key factor contributing to the country's vulnerability to health-related disinformation, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the narratives developed then are still being replicated nowadays and reused in other contexts, such as the bird flu.

EMBLEMATIC CASES

Several cases of disinformation permeate German public opinion to this day.

A FALSE FLAG OPERATION AGAINST THE GREEN PARTY

- In the run-up to Germany's federal elections in February 2025, the authorities uncovered a nationwide sabotage campaign allegedly orchestrated by Russian operatives. The sabotage is seen as part of a broader pattern of Russian interference, combining disinformation campaigns—like Doppelganger—with real-world disruptions to destabilise Germany and influence its democratic processes.

- Over 270 cars were damaged across several states, including Berlin, Brandenburg, Bavaria, and Baden-Württemberg. The vehicles' exhaust pipes were blocked with construction foam, and stickers featuring Economy Minister Robert Habeck (Green Party) with the slogan "Be more green!" were placed on them—seemingly to falsely implicate climate activists and incite anger against the Green Party.

- Initial suspicion fell on radical climate groups and the Green Party, but investigations shifted after police detained three suspects in Brandenburg. Police searches uncovered materials linked to the sabotage. According to one suspect, a Russian citizen recruited them for 100€ per vehicle, with photo proof required. Thousands of euros had allegedly already been paid out.

- Political leaders across parties reacted with concern. Green Party leader Franziska Brantner called the attacks part of Russia's ongoing hybrid warfare, targeting democratic institutions and pro-Ukraine voices. CDU security expert Roderich Kiesewetter and SPD interior official Sebastian Hartmann warned of a growing need to coordinate intelligence efforts and protect critical infrastructure.

MASS MEDIA IMPERSONATION: GERMANY, KEY TARGET OF THE DOPPELGANGER CAMPAIGN

- In August 2022, T-Online and Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ) publicly reported the impersonation of German media outlets used to disseminate disinformation related primarily to the war in Ukraine. This marked the early exposure of the later dubbed Doppelganger campaign, a Russian influence operation attributed to Structura and SDA, two entities closely linked to the Kremlin. Initially focused on European countries, the campaign soon expanded its reach globally, with Germany becoming one of its primary targets. The campaign used sophisticated tactics to deceive German audiences, including cloning legitimate media websites like Bild, Spiegel, and FAZ through typosquatting. Some institutions, such as

the police and the Ministry of Interior, were also targeted. The false sites published fabricated articles and fake communications aligned with Russian propaganda objectives. While media impersonation was the campaign's cornerstone tactic, it quickly expanded to include entirely fabricated websites posing as legitimate news sources.

- The efforts of researchers succeeded in partially disrupting the Doppelganger campaign, leading to the dismantling of its infrastructure in November 2024 to some extent. While this marked a significant setback for the operation, the campaign was reactivated in parts during the most recent elections, demonstrating that the threat remains ongoing and requires continued vigilance.
- The disinformation was aggressively promoted on social media platforms, especially X (formerly Twitter) and Meta (Facebook), often through paid advertising. To remain undetected, Doppelganger employed multi-stage redirects and obfuscation methods, complicating efforts by platforms and researchers to trace the campaign.
- The narratives promoted were strongly pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian, accusing Ukraine of corruption and neo-Nazism, while also blaming Ukrainian refugees for rising extremism in Germany. The campaign called for lifting sanctions on Russia and framed Germany's support for Ukraine as harmful to its own people. It further spread conspiracy theories, attacking democratic institutions and aligning with ongoing political debates. The broader goal was to weaken support for Ukraine and destabilise Western democracies by exploiting societal divisions and eroding trust in democratic leadership.

ANNALENA BAERBOCK'S NUDE PICTURE

- This case, which we had already highlighted in our previous edition, is a clear example of two key disinformation trends in Germany that are still relevant nowadays: the targeted attacks on the Green Party, and gender-based disinformation. During the 2021 election campaign, disinformation heavily attacked the party, especially its female top candidate Annalena Baerbock. Among the many hoaxes circulating, one was particularly viral and harmful: an alleged photo of her posing nude, accompanied by a quote claiming she "was young and needed the money" attributed to Baerbock (the person portrayed in the picture was a model who looked like Baerbock). Although not confirmed, some Green politicians pointed to potential Russian involvement.
- This attack is just one example of other sexist disinformation items against female politicians, especially from the Green Party. Its former leader, Ricarda Lang, was also regularly targeted by fake posts.

THE LISA F. CASE

- As mentioned in the previous factsheet, the Lisa F. case remains one of the most emblematic cases in Germany. It contains many ingredients that make up a true disinformation thriller and illustrates several challenges facing the country today.

In January 2016, Lisa F., a 13-year-old girl with dual German and Russian citizenship, disappeared in Berlin and was missing for 30 hours. She later returned home and reported that she had been assaulted and raped by three men of Arab origin. Russian media echoed her testimony, adding that the Berlin police had refused to search for the alleged perpetrators and to launch a criminal investigation of the incident.

- These false claims sparked protests among Russian-German communities and neo-Nazi groups against migrants and refugees arriving from the Mediterranean, including an attack on a reception centre. Shortly after, the police determined that the girl's story was fabricated. Today, the story is still remembered in Germany as a hoax that exploited a controversial domestic issue (i.e., the reception of Arab refugees in the country). It was instrumentalised by Russian media to stir up domestic polarisation.
- In recent years, similar cases containing the same elements -anti-migration or anti-refugee narratives and foreign instrumentalisation- have emerged in the German media landscape, such as the circulation of a viral fake story about Ukrainian citizens allegedly beating a teenager to death in Euskirchen in 2022.

NARRATIVES

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

ELECTORAL DISINFORMATION: FRAUD AND FAKE RE-RUN

- Following the collapse of the coalition government comprising the Social Democrats, Liberals, and Greens, the country held snap federal elections in February 2025, which resulted in a shift of power. A new government was formed by the Conservatives (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats, led by Chancellor Friedrich Merz (CDU). In 2024, Germany held three regional elections—in Saxony, Thuringia, and Brandenburg—as well as European Parliament elections. These contests were notable for the surge in support for the far-right party AfD, which finished second in all but one region—Thuringia, where it emerged as the leading party.
- Across these elections, a wave of disinformation and conspiracy theories circulated online. False claims of electoral fraud and vote manipulation—often portraying the AfD as the main victim—were widespread. Additionally, disinformation targeted various parties and candidates, aiming to discredit democratic institutions and undermine trust in the electoral process.
- Among these tactics were false flag operations, including an already mentioned fabricated story about a sabotage attack on cars, which Russian-linked actors attempted to attribute to the Green Party in an effort to stir public outrage and polarisation. Other attempts to discredit the elections were created or amplified by pro-Russian accounts, fueling the FIMI suspicions. One of the biggest disinformation events before the federal elections 2025 was the Russian campaign Storm 1516, targeting the Green Party's candidate Robert Habeck and the CDU's candidate Friedrich Merz with sophisticated fakes, including AI, as reported by CORRECTIV. For instance, a fabricated article and video falsely alleged that Habeck had abused a young woman years ago or that the former Foreign Minister Baerbock met with a gigolo during visits to Africa.
- Another threat detected in these elections was the algorithmic distortions, accredited by various investigations in networks like TikTok or X, mostly favouring the AfD.
- Another tactic employed in the 2025 elections was to sow confusion about their validity, with misleading narratives about the possibility of contesting the elections following problems with the overseas vote or false narratives about a fake re-run on 6 May, followed by false polls where AfD would eventually win. At the same time, disinformation about the new chancellor's alleged promises or the criminal nature of his failure to keep his election commitments has begun to overshadow Merz's first weeks in office.

INSTITUTIONAL DISTRUST AND DENIALISM

- All of the previous narratives have a point of convergence: they can be instrumentalised to undermine the foundations of democracy in Germany. Disinformation questioning the government's policy on COVID-19 or the war in Ukraine is another example. Furthermore, false narratives have still continued to circulate in recent years about alleged government inaction in the region affected by severe flooding in 2021.
- The delegitimisation of German institutions finds one of its most extreme expressions in the ideology of the already mentioned *Reichsbürger* movement. Its members reject the legitimacy of the German state, claiming that Germany has remained an occupied territory since World War II and therefore lacks true sovereignty or authority, including in matters of taxation. Drawing inspiration from deep state conspiracy theories of QAnon, the movement escalated its actions to a thwarted *coup d'état* in 2022 and kept questioning the validity of the electoral process. Recently, its largest subgroup, Königreich Deutschland (Kingdom of Germany) was banned, and its leader, Peter Fitzek, was arrested for going "against constitutional order".

AGAINST THE GREEN PARTY & CLIMATE CHANGE DENIAL

- The Green Party is still one of the main targets of political disinformation: new narratives have emerged, falsely claiming that they will ban different activities, as already happened in the past. One of its main figures, Annalena Baerbock -victim of an already mentioned defamation campaign in 2021- was attacked with new hoaxes during her mandate as foreign minister in Olaf Scholz's government, from December 2021 to May 2025 and even thereafter.
- In the meantime, climate change disinformation, occasionally targeting the Green party as well, has worsened considerably. While denialist disinformation narratives continue, new discourses try to slow down the rise of green energies at a time of energy debate where nuclear and renewable energy are at stake.
- The situation has been exacerbated by Trump spreading narratives around climate change in Germany, with the AfD and the broader anti-climate movement increasingly aligning both politically and rhetorically with MAGA figures. Their messaging now echoes the language and strategy of US climate change denial campaigns. As CORRECTIV research explains, within the German political landscape, the AfD has emerged as a key promoter of climate skepticism, openly questioning the scientific consensus on human-induced climate change. In its election manifesto, the party claims that climate change is a natural phenomenon that has "always existed" and argues that human influence is "scientifically inexplicable." The AfD has consistently opposed renewable energy initiatives, frequently attacking wind and solar projects. At the party's January conference, co-leader Alice Weidel condemned wind energy, referring to wind turbines as "wind turbines of shame." Additionally, there is growing evidence of both personnel and ideological convergence between AfD representatives and the broader international climate denial ecosystem. These connections are embedding the party more

deeply within transnational networks that actively dispute climate science and obstruct climate policy efforts, as stated by CORRECTIV.

ALTERNATIVE HEALTH MINDSET AND VACCINE HESITANCY

- As with climate change issues, developments in the United States have further fueled anti-vaccine narratives, particularly following the appointment of Robert Kennedy Jr. as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health. His appointment has energised long-standing anti-vaccine sentiments, with new hoaxes triggering fear of a compulsory vaccination. Anti-vaccine narratives were significantly amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic, but had already taken root before.
- Germany's alternative medicine and anthroposophy tradition were fertile ground for denialism narratives during the pandemic, including the denial of the virus's existence, downplaying its severity, or questioning the need for public health measures. These narratives merged with broader conspiracy theories, culminating in protest movements such as the *Querdenker* ("lateral thinkers"). These dynamics have had a tangible impact nowadays on public trust in institutions and vaccination rates. For instance, in April 2023, only 76,4% of the German population was fully vaccinated against COVID-19, a lower rate than in other European countries. The same year, only 36% of Germans reported high or moderately high trust in the federal government, below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 39%.
- Nowadays, some politicians from the AfD are still using the World Health Organisation (WHO) pandemic agreement for political goals, claiming that it deprives countries of their sovereignty. At the same time, some famous COVID deniers and anti-vaccine voices are still active, and many of them have switched to support pro-Russian views, such as Markus Haintz, or climate denialism, such as Stephan Homburg.

PRO-RUSSIAN STANCES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE

- Pro-Russian disinformation related to the war in Ukraine which started in 2022 remains present in Germany nowadays with misleading claims regarding the potential end of the war, **casualty** figures, or the situation of Ukrainian refugees in Germany.
- During the course of the war, disinformation narratives evolved in an attempt to sway German public opinion against continued support for Ukraine and sanctions on Russia. These narratives exploited economic anxieties, emphasising the potential negative impact on Germany's own economy.
- Even prior to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Germany had already been a primary Western target of Russian propaganda, as documented in a pre-war report —a finding later reaffirmed during the conflict. Disinformation narratives circulating in Germany echoed the Kremlin's justifications for the invasion, such as NATO's

eastward expansion, alleged threats to pro-Russian populations in Ukraine, and the portrayal of Ukraine as a Nazi regime. Propaganda also included fabricated reports of Russian military successes and denials of civilian harm, contributing to shifts in public opinion.

- Several factors made Germany especially susceptible to this influence, including its historical ties to the former Eastern Bloc through the now-defunct German Democratic Republic (East Germany), a political culture that fostered close relations with Russia—exemplified by figures like the former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder—and deep economic dependence on Russian energy exports.

ANTI-REFUGEES AND ANTI-IMMIGRANTS NARRATIVES

- Today, hoaxes targeting refugees and migrants remain widespread, often focused on fabricated crimes designed to incite fear and hatred. These false narratives have broadened beyond refugees to encompass migrants more generally, particularly those from culturally and religiously diverse backgrounds, such as individuals of Arab descent.
- Initially focused on the refugee influx from the Mediterranean in 2015 and from Ukraine since 2022, disinformation campaigns falsely claimed that refugees received disproportionate benefits compared to German citizens and portrayed them as inherently criminal. In both the 2015 refugee crisis and the post-2022 influx following the war in Ukraine, pro-Russian propaganda actively capitalised on these tensions.
- Anti-migrant hoaxes are also common after violent events, such as those that have recently taken place in Germany. After a knife attack in Hamburg in May 2025, for example, it was questioned whether a Syrian man had helped to stop the attacker, pointing out that the image distributed by the media had been generated with artificial intelligence. And thus denying that a migrant can make a positive contribution to German society.

COMMUNITY

The main actors countering disinformation in Germany are listed hereafter.

FACT-CHECKERS

- CORRECTIV is one of Germany's leading fact-checkers that combines hoax debunking with investigative journalism. The organisation is financed by a mix of private donations, institutional support, and its income sources. It is a verified signatory of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) Code of Principles. Since its foundation in 2014, CORRECTIV has been awarded over 30 prizes for its journalistic work.
- DPA-FACTCHECKING is the fact-checking section of the leading news agency in Germany, dpa. According to their self-description: “Our goal is to advance the fact-checking format journalistically and thus counteract the worrying social developments. We have an independent fact-checking editorial team that specifically checks possible false claims and produces professional fact-checks. The editorial team decides on the publication itself - without editorial influence from outside”. It is also a verified signatory of the IFCN Code of Principles, and debunks hoaxes in multiple languages.
- ARD - Faktenfinder is the fact-checking section of the German public broadcaster ARD. Despite not being an IFCN member, it complies broadly with its high standards and publishes feature stories on disinformation narratives in Germany.
- ZDF investigativ - is a public television channel in Germany, which includes a section publishing research, exclusive content from ZDF newsrooms and studios, current investigations, and fact-checks.
- BR24 #Faktenfuchs is the fact-checking section of the Bavarian public broadcaster BR, and an IFCN verified signatory.
- AFP – Faktencheck is based in Austria, but it also debunks disinformation that circulates in Germany, as an IFCN signatory and the fact-checking section of the French news agency AFP in German language.
- The German Deutsche Welle (DW) TV has a fact-check team that publishes debunkings and research in English, German, Arabic, and Spanish.

SOME ORGANISATIONS RESEARCHING DISINFORMATION

- CeMAS (Centre for Monitoring, Analysis and Strategy) combines interdisciplinary expertise on conspiracy ideologies, disinformation, antisemitism, and right-wing extremism. The non-profit addresses current developments within the thematic fields online through systematic monitoring of central digital platforms and modern study designs in order to derive innovative analyses and recommendations for action. In addition, CeMAS advises decision-makers from civil society, media, and politics.

- ISD GERMANY (Institute for Strategic Dialogue). ISD self-describes as an independent, non-profit organisation dedicated to safeguarding human rights and reversing the rising tide of polarisation, extremism, and disinformation worldwide. As a German subsidiary of the homonym London-based think tank, it analyses social and political trends in the German-speaking world from a global perspective, focusing on "analysis, advisory, action".
- NEWSGUARD GERMANY is the German subsidiary of NewsGuard, a journalism and technology tool that rates the credibility of news and information websites and tracks online disinformation in several countries.
- DEMOCRACY REPORTING INTERNATIONAL (DRI) is a not-for-profit organisation and think tank registered in Berlin, which was established in January 2006. DRI promotes political participation of citizens, accountability of state bodies, and the development of democratic institutions worldwide. Focused on electoral observation, it also monitors social media discourse and disinformation in elections.

JOINT-VENTURES AND AD HOC INITIATIVES AGAINST DISINFORMATION

- In November 2022, GADMO, the German-Austrian Digital Media Observatory, started its activity. Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa), Agence France-Press (AFP), Austria Presse Agentur (APA), and the independent research network CORRECTIV work together in this local hub of the broader European project EDMO (European Digital Media Observatory), which was recently extended to the German-speaking countries.
- On the occasion of the German 2021 general elections, several initiatives were created to counter electoral disinformation, as EU DisinfoLab reported.
- Governmental stakeholders including the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI), the Federal Foreign Office (AA), or the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) have also been involved in the fight against disinformation and FIMI in the country. As the BMI explains in its website, shortly after the start of the war, a sub-working group Russia/Ukraine (RUS/UKR) was set up under the leadership of the BMI within the interdepartmental Hybrid Threats Working Group (Hybrid). The sub-working group aims "to ensure a close interdepartmental and inter-agency exchange on the identification and defence against hybrid threats, in particular disinformation, in connection with Russia's war in Ukraine". The AA, the BMI, and the Federal Press Office (BPA) "are closely monitoring the information space in the context of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine with regard to false or misleading information circulating there and are in constant and very close dialogue with other federal and state ministries and authorities." Meanwhile, the BfV "contributes to the clarification of the background of state activities in information space, in particular with its knowledge about foreign intelligence services and their involvement in the coordinated actions of foreign states," as indicated on its website. In addition to this, BMI is currently establishing an interministerial Central Office for the Detection of Foreign Information Manipulation (ZEAM). Its mission is to increase the capabilities for early detection of foreign influence and manipulation campaigns and improve response capabilities.

POLICY AGAINST DISINFO

Germany does not have an ad hoc law criminalising disinformation, but there are some legislative tools that can help to combat FIMI and systematic attempts to manipulate the information space.

- The Digital Services Act (DSA) came into force on 16 November 2022, -with most of the provisions becoming fully applicable in February 2024- making it a new tool to combat disinformation and FIMI incidents circulating on platforms in Germany as well. The Bundesnetzagentur was nominated as Digital Services Coordinator (DSC), becoming the contact point for users and intermediary of the different stakeholders to implement the legislation. One of the first cases to measure the pulse of compliance with the law was seen around the February elections, when Democracy Reporting International (DRI) and Society for Civil Rights (Gesellschaft für Freiheitsrechte, GFF) demanded access to public data to X to conduct a pre-electoral analysis. The request led to a mediatic dispute that highlighted tensions between transparency and platform control. A German court ruling forced X to allow researchers real-time access to data, but Elon Musk contested the decision. The last update is a decision of a court confirming the valid jurisdiction of Berlin to decide on the case.

- The DSA replaced most parts of Germany's Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG), which were annulled on 13th May 2024. The NetzDG allowed criminally punishable disinformation (such as incitement to hatred, threats, or defamation) and other unlawful content to be removed from social media. Approved in October 2017, the law obligated platform operators such as Facebook, Twitter, Google, or Instagram to remove illegal content within 24 hours after users report it.

- Another legal tool is the criminal code article against incitement to hatred, leading to the conviction of some people spreading antisemitic content and disinformation, also considering the illegality of Holocaust denialism.

- Regarding laws to protect journalists or whistleblowers from abuse, Germany passed the Whistleblower Protection Act in December 2022, transposing the European Directive for the Protection of Whistleblowers (EU 2019/1937 – "Whistleblower Directive") with some delay. However, some organisations filed a lawsuit after the German federal parliament, as part of its reform of the Constitution Protection Act last June, permitted all intelligence agencies to use spyware to hack into smartphones and computers. They are now also allowed to record encrypted messages and calls via Signal, Telegram, WhatsApp, and others, which could conflict with whistleblowers' protection.

- Recent case law: A recent case in the fight against disinformation created a lot of headlines in Germany, when an editor-in-chief of AfD-affiliated media was sentenced to seven months' probation for altering and sharing a photograph of the Federal Minister of the Interior. The court ordered him to apologise in writing to Nancy Faeser. The verdict sparked protests from those affected and a discussion about the free speech limits.

- The new government's fight against disinformation: The new government's coalition agreement has included a paragraph declaring its willingness to fight disinformation. “The deliberate dissemination of false claims is not covered by freedom of expression. Therefore, the non-governmental media regulatory body must be able to act against manipulation of information, as well as hate speech and incitement, preserving freedom of expression and based on clear legal guidelines”. Although it has been misinterpreted and triggered accusations of potential censorship, the assessment doesn’t constitute a new form of restrictions on freedom of expression. It simply reflects an alignment with existing laws and the new government’s intention to systematically apply European regulations, which could imply changes in media oversight in Germany’s federal states, as each federal state is responsible for its own media oversight, according to CORRECTIV.

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