Dubrovnik Media Days 2023: Disinformation Research: Current Trends and Perspectives / Dubrovački medijski dani 2023.: Istraživanje dezinformacija: trenutni trendovi i perspektive

For the 16th time, the Department of Mass Communication of the University of Dubrovnik organized the international scientific conference Dubrovnik Media Days, which took place on September 29 and 30, 2023. The theme of the conference was *Disinformation Research: Current Trends and Perspectives*, and about 90 authors from more than 20 countries of the world participated. The conference began with a ceremonial opening on the terrace of the Dubrovnik Art Gallery, where the following addressed the participants with welcoming speeches: Vice-President of the European Commission Dubravka Šuica, Minister of Culture and Media Nina Obuljen Koržinek, Mayor of the City of Dubrovnik Mato Franković, Vice-Rector for Studies and Students of the University of Dubrovnik, Sanja Žaja Vrbica, EDMO program director Paolo Cesarini and Head of the Department of Communication and Head of the ADMO project Mato Brautović.

The working sessions of the conference began with a keynote address by Claes H. de Vrees from the University of Amsterdam. De Vrees shared insights into the revolutionary impact of artificial intelligence in communication. The program continued with a lecture by Lena Naesager, the director of Strategic and Corporate communication at the European Commission. Naesager's presentation focused on the challenges that disinformation and artificial intelligence pose for the European Union, exploring topics such as regulation, cooperation, and effective countermeasures.

A panel discussion was organized in which the issues presented in Naesager's lecture were discussed in greater depth. Panel participants were Denis Teyssou, AFP France, Matej Gjurković, University of Zagreb, Croatia, Claes H. de Vreese, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, Andrea Čović Vidović, Head of Representation (Acting) and Head of Press and Media, European Commission Representation in Croatia, Iva Nenadić, University of Zagreb and European University Institute and the moderator was Barbara Peranić, Press Officer, European Parliament Liaison Office in Croatia. Second keynote speaker was Samantha Bradshaw from the American University in USA, giving insights into the challenges of disinformation on democracy.

Track 1 featured three sessions on "Unveiling and Countering Domestic Disinformation", "Understanding Disinformation Psychology and Audience Behavior", and "Research Frameworks with Detection Methods". It included more than 20 compelling titles and authors who delivered interesting findings. For example, a notable study in this track, "Unwanted Influence in the Facebook News Feed: Comparing Citizen Exposure to Verified False Content in all 27 EU Member States

and the UK" presented by Anton Holt et al., from DATALAB and Aarhus University explored the spread of misinformation across the EU and the UK. It revealed that the use of engagement scores may overestimate the user age by up to 10 years when measuring the spread of misinformation. Men are more affected by misinformation than general content, and women aged 35 to 44 are the most affected demographic. The content analysis highlighted variations in misinformation exposure based on age and gender, with content often linked to major events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, elections, and the war in Ukraine. These findings could offer important insights for improving strategies to mitigate the impact of misinformation.

Track 2 comprised three sessions exploring "Unraveling Russia's Information Operations: Decoding Tactics and Impacts," "AI and Disinformation Detection," and "Code of Practice on Disinformation and Policy Research." Approximately 20 presentations were delivered, presenting intriguing discoveries and insights. For example, Sarris et al., from the Centre for Research and Technology-Hellas, Information Technologies Institute, presented the study "The MedDMO Multimedia Analysis Toolbox for countering disinformation". The Multimedia Analysis Tools were developed by MeVer (Media Analysis Verification and Retrieval group) for fact-checkers in the MedDMO (Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory) project. Enhanced for contemporary challenges in disinformation, these tools can operate independently or integrate into MAAM3, a web-based application from MeVer's MediaVerse project. These tools collectively provide fact-checkers with a comprehensive suite for analyzing, verifying, and annotating multimedia content, aiding in addressing the challenges posed by disinformation.

Track 3, in cooperation with the Agency for Electronic Media, offered a series of engaging workshops focused on the fundamentals of fact-checking and related topics. Tommaso Canetta from Pagella Politica, Italy, led a workshop on the basics of fact-checking, providing participants with essential skills and knowledge in the field. Vincent Couronne, Treasurer, and member of the Governance Body of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN), France, led a workshop guiding the attendees on how to become a member of the EFCSN. This session offered valuable insights into the standards and practices upheld by the European Fact-Checking community. The final workshop of the day titled "InVID WeVerify," was facilitated by Denis Teyssou from AFP, France. This workshop delved into the InVID verification tool and the WeVerify project, providing participants with practical knowledge on leveraging these resources for effective fact-checking.

The plenary session brought together key stakeholders to discuss and evaluate the pilot project of the Agency for Electronic Media's (AEM) and Ministry of Culture and Media on establishing fact-checking organizations in Croatia. The session was attended by prominent figures who played vital roles in shaping fact-checking initiatives in the country: Iva Nenadić Litre, University of Zagreb and European University Institute, Robert Tomljenović, Agency for Electronic Media and Marijana Grbeša, University of Zagreb. Additionally, members from non-profit, non-governmental organizations (NPOOs) engaged in fact-checking projects in Croatia shared their experiences and contributions, which added depth to the discussion and highlighted the joint efforts across different sectors to address disinformation: Nina Šiprak Wendling and Lidija Štelcer presented project VerifEye, Josip Šipić and Iva Zelić project GenderFacts and Ivana Grkeš project DU-CHECK.

To summarise, the Dubrovnik Media Days 2023 succeeded in bringing together experts, researchers, and practitioners to share knowledge, strategies, and experiences in the ongoing battle against disinformation. The conference's comprehensive program and collaborative spirit set the stage for continued efforts to unravel, understand, and counter the evolving landscape of disinformation in the years to come.

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