

SMARTeD
against fake news



Ministry of Culture
Republic of Latvia

Smart eDemocracy Against Fake News

(SMARTeD project)

<https://smartedemocracy.org/>

Survey on disinformation and fake news

(descriptive analysis of survey data)

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I. About the survey

The exposure of citizens to large scale disinformation, including misleading or outright false information, is a major challenge for European societies. The project “Smart eDemocracy Against Fake News” (SMARTeD) aims to raise awareness on the impact of the disinformation and fake news on active citizenship at local, national and European level.

Objectives

Following the aim of the project, an on-line survey has been implemented to collect national realities, approaches and practical applications with the following specific objectives:

- To assess the overall relevance of the issue of the disinformation and fake news in partnering countries of the project.
- To assess the significance and effectiveness of different actions aimed to minimise the negative effects of the disinformation on national and European level, including actions that can be taken by online platforms, and the use of e-democracy tools.
- To address the role of politicisation in disinformation strategies as one of the causes of disinformation and fake news.

Background

The survey builds on European wide studies where the feedback from the experts and general public has been gathered via consultations and representative opinion polls such as Eurobarometer Survey on Fake News and Disinformation Online conducted in February 2018 and the report on Multi-Dimensional Approach to Disinformation of the independent High level Expert Group on fake news and online disinformation published in March 2018.

Methodology

On-line survey assessed the relevance of the issue of the disinformation and fake news in 6 EU member states Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Greece, Latvia and Slovenia. On-line survey data collection took place in October and November 2018.

Target groups

The survey target group were academic experts with relevant backgrounds, representatives from organisations specialising in studying the disinformation and its effects on society, civil society organisations working in areas of media, democracy and civil society as well as journalists.

Topics covered in report

This reports highlights the main results in mapping the disinformation and fake news issue in surveyed countries (extent, personal experience, affected areas, agents, channels, politicisation of information) and different dimensions of tackling the problem (measures, policies, tools, actors).

Limitations

Due to the non-probability sample of the survey, the results are not representative for surveyed countries populations nor for surveyed target groups.

Survey consortium

The on-line survey was implemented by the SMARTeD consortium partners lead by ManaBalss.lv in collaboration with the University of Latvia.

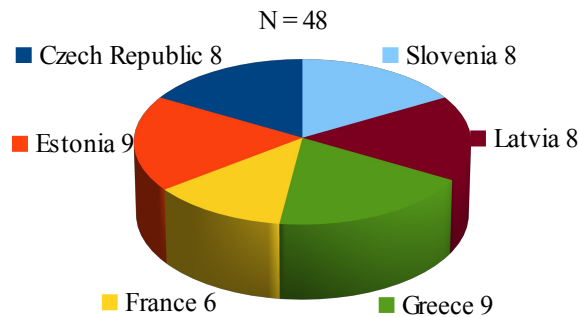
II. Survey participants

The following sets of data on demographic profile of survey participants have been gathered: country of nationality and professional affiliation.

1 Survey participants per country

In total, 48 completed surveys were received from survey participants. There were 9 participants from Estonia and Greece, 8 from Czech Republic, Latvia and Slovenia and 6 from France.

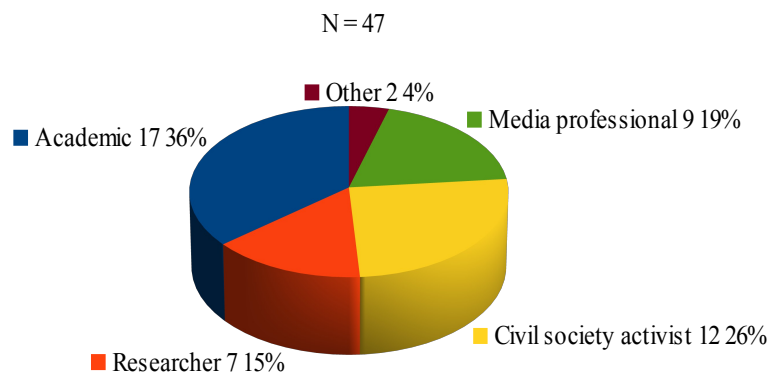
Chart 1: Survey participants per country



2 Survey participants per professional affiliation

The main group of survey participants came from academia 17 (36 %), followed by civil society activists 12 (26 %), media professionals / journalists 9 (19 %) and researchers 7 (15 %). Two respondents (category Other) indicated they are both researcher / media professional and academic / civil society.

Chart 2: Survey participants per professional affiliation



III. Mapping the disinformation and fake news issue

This section presents descriptive analysis of data about the scope of disinformation and fake news issue in surveyed countries. Particular attention is focused on personal experience with disinformation, affected areas of life, agents, channels, and politicisation of information.

3 Disinformation problem per country

The existence of disinformation represents a problem in their countries, according to survey participants opinion. Mean value (M) for surveyed countries is 1.42 on the 4 point assessment scale (value 1 indicates that disinformation is definitely a problem in a country, while value 4 indicates that it is definitely not a problem).

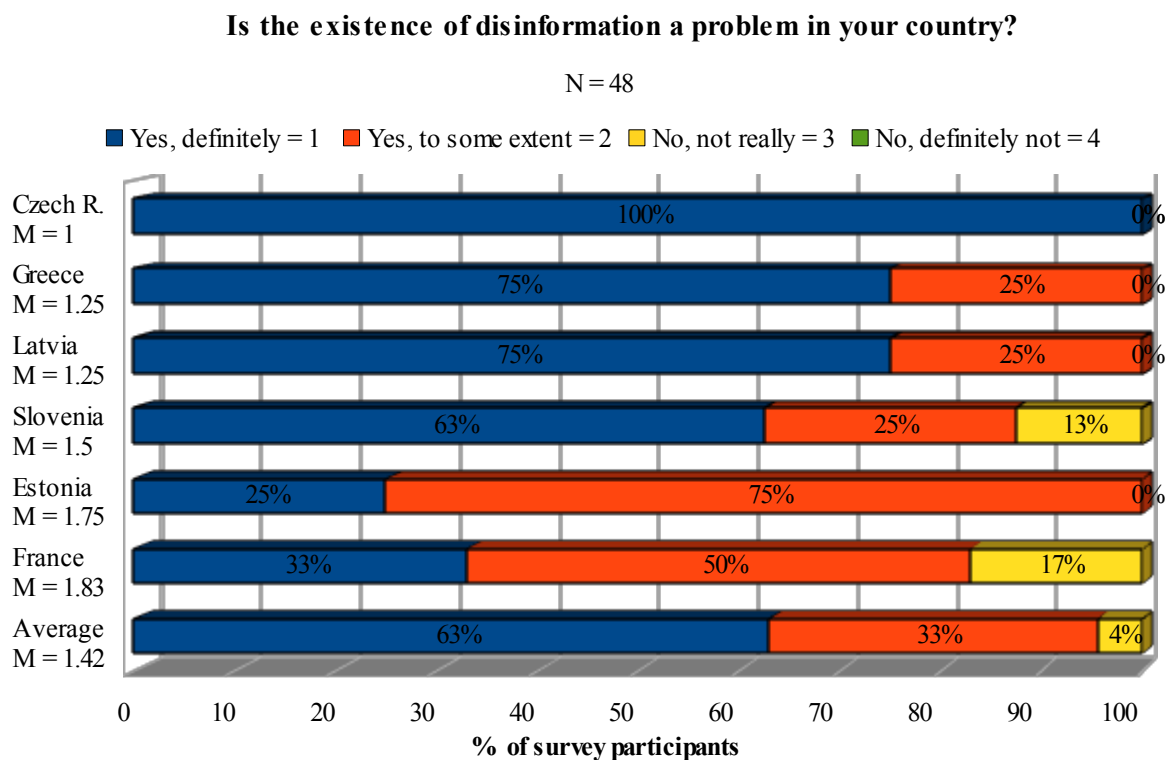
In Czech Republic (M = 1), Greece (M = 1.25), Latvia (M = 1.25) and Slovenia (M = 1.5) disinformation definitely represents a problem. In Estonia (M = 1.75) and France (M = 1.83) disinformation represents a problem to some extent.

All respondents from Czech Republic and majority from Greece (75 %), Latvia (75 %) and Slovenia (63 %) consider disinformation in their countries a definite problem. Majority of respondents from Estonia (75 %) and 50% from France indicated disinformation in their countries represents a problem to some extent.

Overall, 63 % of all survey participants indicated that disinformation in their countries is definitely a problem and 33 % of participants consider this is a problem to some extent.

Survey participant specifically pointed out a problem with Russian disinformation campaigns in his/her country.

Chart 3: Disinformation problem in your country



4 Personal experience with disinformation

The following section presents descriptive analysis of data about survey participant's personal experience with disinformation. Two dimensions of personal views have been assessed: frequency of coming across news of information that participants believe misrepresent reality or is false and

participant's confidence to identify news or information that misrepresent reality or is false.

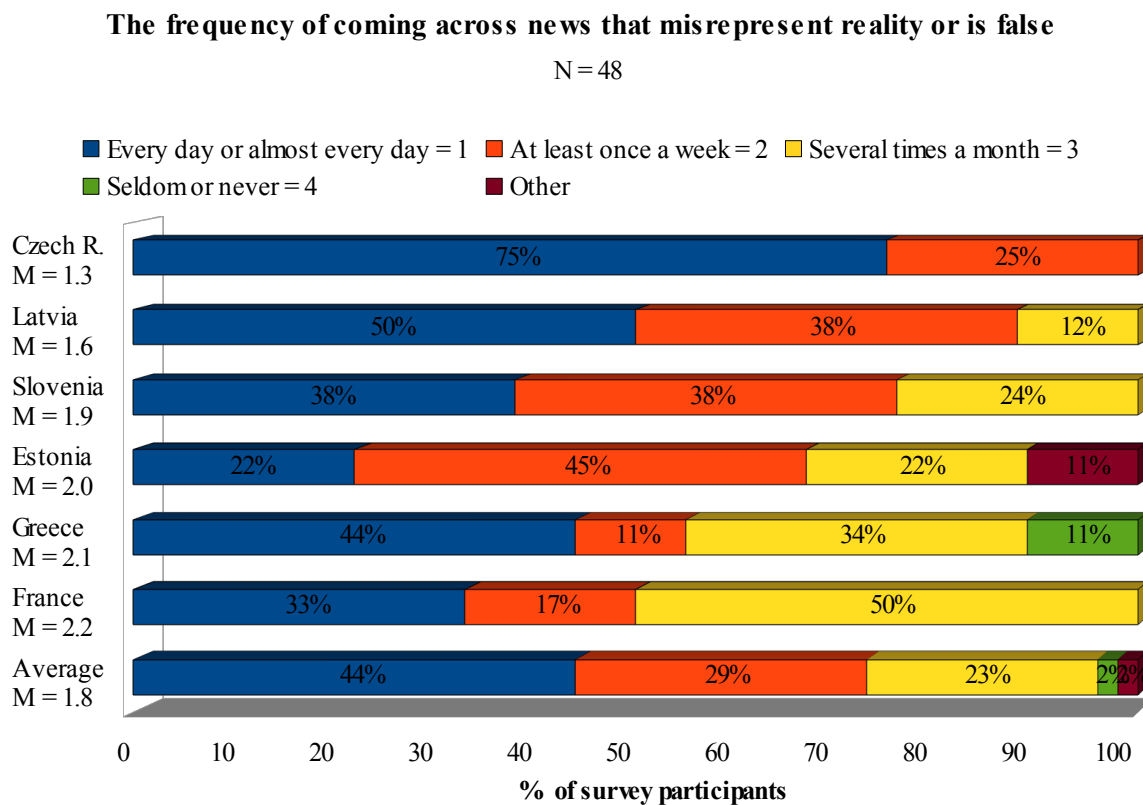
4.1 Frequency of coming across disinformation

Surveyed participants come across news of information that they believe misrepresent reality or is false approximately at least once a week on average (mean value $M = 1.8$ on 4 point scale of measurement).

Respondents from Czech Republic ($M = 1.3$) and Latvia ($M = 1.6$) more often than average come across news of information that they believe misrepresent reality or is false. Respondents from France ($M = 2.2$) come across disinformation less often than average.

Looking at countries in comparison, 75 % of survey participants from Czech Republic come across disinformation every day or almost every day. On the other hand, 49 % of participants from Estonia come across disinformation at least once a week, while 50 % of participants from France have the same experience several times a month.

Chart 4: Frequency of coming across disinformation



4.2 Confidence in identifying disinformation

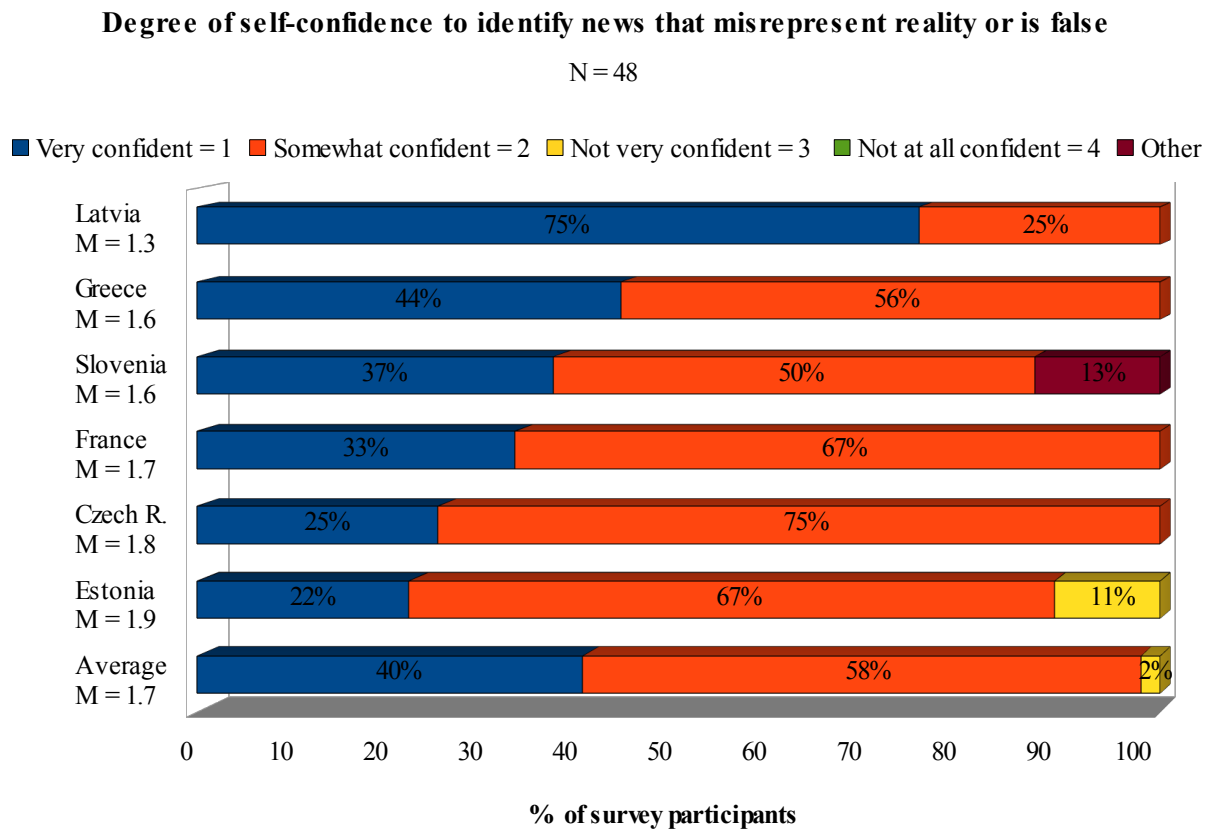
On average, surveyed participants feel personally confident to identify news or information that misrepresent reality or is false (mean value $M = 1.7$ on 4 point scale of measurement).

Respondents from Latvia ($M = 1.3$) feel more confident than average to identify news or information that misrepresent reality or is false. Respondents from Estonia ($M = 1.9$) and Czech

Republic (M = 1.8) feel a little less confident than average.

Looking at countries in comparison, 75 % of survey participants from Latvia feel very confident to identify news or information that misrepresent reality or is false. Otherwise, 75 % of participants from Czech Republic feel somewhat confident and 11 % of participants from Estonia feel not very confident to identify news or information that misrepresent reality or is false.

Chart 5: Confidence in identifying disinformation



5 Ability of country's population to identify disinformation

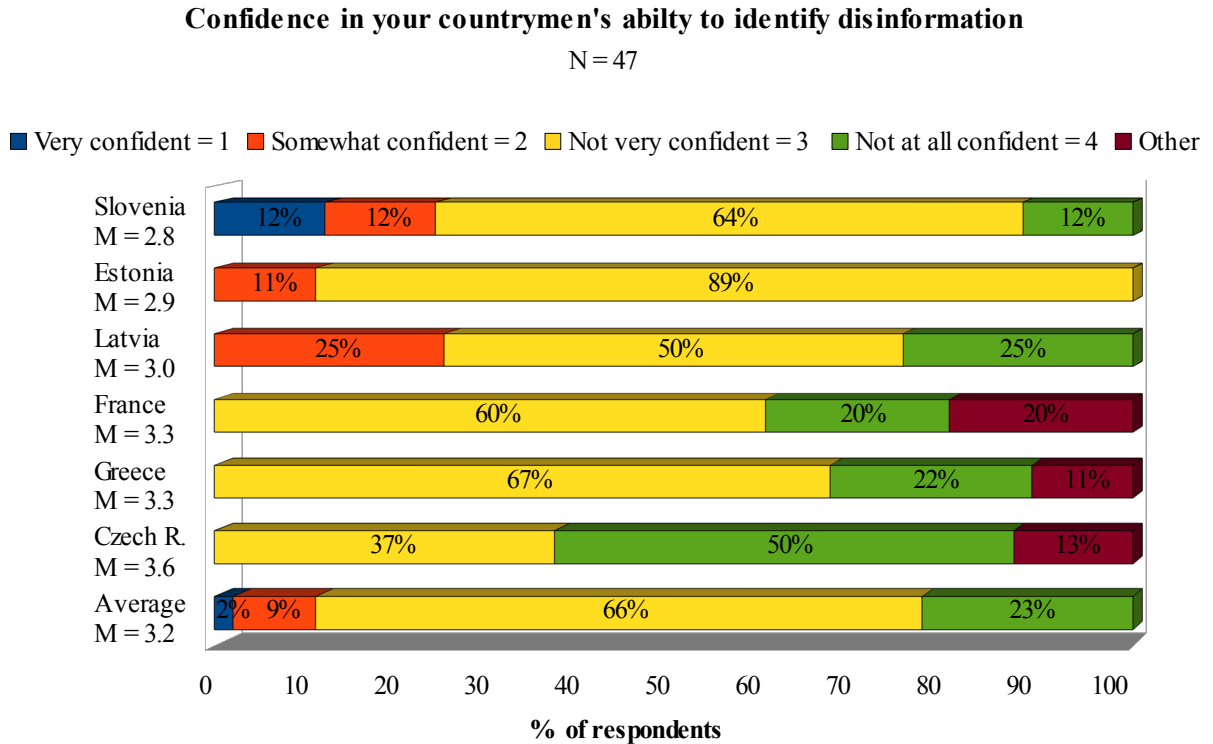
This section displays data about the ability of population to identify disinformation by assessing respondents confidence in their countrymen ability to identify news or information that misrepresent reality or is false and by estimating the share of the population in their country that cannot identify disinformation.

5.1 Confidence in countrymen ability to identify disinformation

Surveyed participants are not very confident in their countrymen ability to identify news or information that misrepresent reality or is false (mean value M = 3.2 on 4 point scale of measurement). On average, 66 % of respondents indicated they are not very confident in their countrymen ability to identify disinformation, while 23 % of respondents are not confident at all.

Respondents from Slovenia (M = 2.8) feel slightly more confident in their countrymen ability to identify disinformation in comparison to other countries, but are still not very confident in general. On the other hand, 50 % of respondents from Czech Republic is not all confident in their countrymen ability to identify disinformation (M = 3.6).

Chart 6: Confidence in identifying disinformation



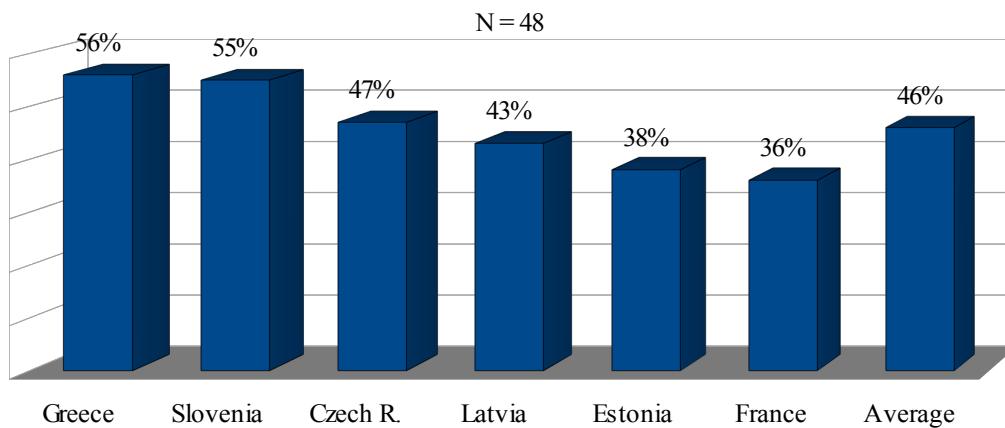
Survey participants shared an additional views about ability of their country's population to identify disinformation:

- there is a big problem with media literacy in the Czech Republic;
- the population in Greece is coming across misleading information every day, however as recent studies and polls reveal Greeks are quite sensitive on the fake news issue;
- the problem is not so much to question the fact of knowing if they identify fake news, but more about why they share it.

5.2 Share of the population that cannot identify disinformation

Respondents from Greece and Slovenia indicated that more than a half of the population (56 % - 55 %) in their countries cannot identify news or information that misrepresent reality or is false.

Chart 7: Share of the population that cannot identify disinformation per country



The share of the population in Czech Republic and Latvia not able to identify disinformation is less than a half of population, while in Estonia and France the share is little more than one third of population (38 % – 36 %). On average, the share of the population that cannot identify disinformation in surveyed countries is 46 % according to survey participants.

6 Areas of public life harmed by an intentional disinformation

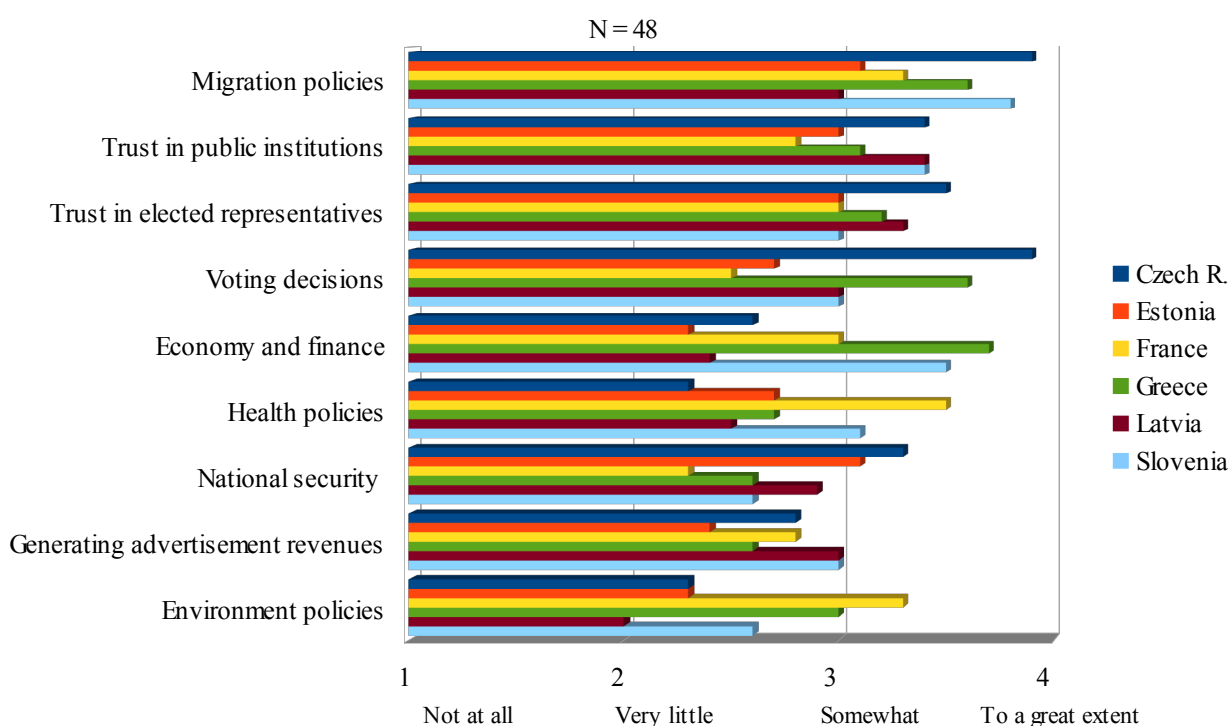
Survey participants consider migration policies area harmed to a greatest extent by an intentional disinformation. Mean value (M) indicating an extent of a harm by disinformation on migration in surveyed countries is 3.5 on four point scale of measurement (value 1 indicates that disinformation is not harming, while value 4 indicates that there is a harm to a great extent).

Table 1: Areas of public life harmed by intentional disinformation

	CZE	EST	FRA	GRE	LAT	SLO	M
Migration policies	3,9	3,1	3,3	3,6	3	3,8	3,5
Trust in public institutions	3,4	3	2,8	3,1	3,4	3,4	3,2
Trust in elected representatives	3,5	3	3	3,2	3,3	3	3,2
Voting decisions	3,9	2,7	2,5	3,6	3	3	3,1
Economy and finance	2,6	2,3	3	3,7	2,4	3,5	2,9
Health policies	2,3	2,7	3,5	2,7	2,5	3,1	2,8
National security	3,3	3,1	2,3	2,6	2,9	2,6	2,8
Generating advertisement revenues	2,8	2,4	2,8	2,6	3	3	2,8
Environment policies	2,3	2,3	3,3	3	2	2,6	2,6
M	3,1	2,7	2,9	3,1	2,8	3,1	

Other areas of society facing a harm to some extent by an intentional disinformation are trust in public institutions and trust in elected representatives (both M = 3.2) and voting decisions (M = 3.1). Environment policies are presenting an area of public life that is on average least harmed by an intentional disinformation (M = 2.6).

Chart 8: An extent of harm caused by an intentional disinformation in areas of public life



Looking at country comparison, survey participants from Czech Republic (M = 3.9), Slovenia (M = 3.8) and Greece (M = 3.6) indicated great extent of harm caused by disinformation in migration policies area. Voting decisions have been extensively harmed by disinformation in Czech Republic (M = 3.9) and Greece (M = 3.6). In Greece, economy and finance (M = 3.7) are another area harmed to a greatest extent by an intentional disinformation.

Areas of public life least harmed by an intentional disinformation in a country are environment policies in Latvia (M = 2), Czech Republic and Estonia (both M = 2.3), national security in France (M = 2.3) and economy and finance in Estonia (M = 2.3)

In Estonia, (M = 2.1) all areas of public life are on average less harmed by an intentional disinformation comparing to other countries. In Czech Republic and Slovenia (both M = 3.1) all areas of public life are on average more harmed by an intentional disinformation comparing to other countries.

Survey participants shared an additional areas harmed by an intentional disinformation in their countries: social issues, trust in NGOs and their role in society, relations between ethnic groups, social (and ethnic) integration, trust in institutions, trust in professional journalism, education and history (WWII).

7 Views on politicization of information

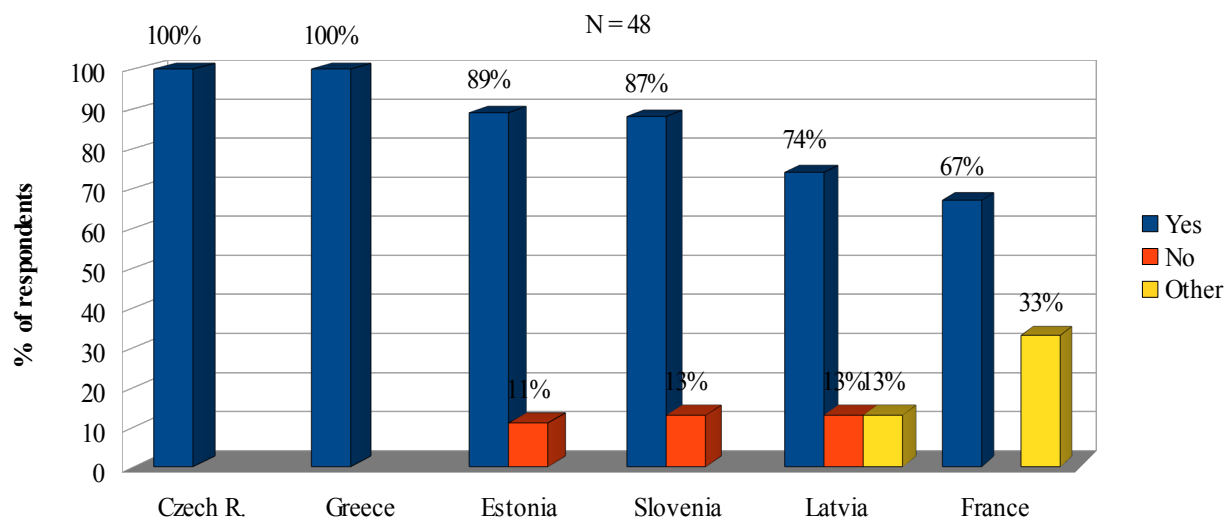
The following section presents views on politicization of information, which can cause an activity or event to become political in character and consequently generate disinformation and fake news.

7.1 Politicization challenge in Europe

All survey respondents from Czech Republic and Greece and almost all respondents from Estonia and Slovenia see politicization of certain things, events, processes and milestones of present or past as a considerable challenge in the social and political life in contemporary Europe. One quarter (26 %) of respondents from Latvia and one third (33 %) from France do not think politicization represents a challenge.

Chart 9: Politicization challenge in Europe

Can politicization of present or past be regarded as a considerable challenge in contemporary Europe?



Survey participants provided additional views on politicization in Europe:

- politicization is not an issue, as long as citizens are in full capacity of perceiving and reacting to politicization;
- it is normal for some survey participants that certain issues will be politicized in democracy.

7.2 Most often politicized phenomena

Survey participants indicated several phenomena are often politicized in their countries. On average, current social issues (refugees, immigrants) are the most often politicized topic in surveyed countries according to one third of respondents (34 %). Milestones of history (27 %) and national security (25 %) are consider the most often politicized topic by roughly one quarter of respondents. The smallest share of respondents (14 %) indicated economic affairs to be the most often politicized topic in their countries.

Current social issues are the most often politicized topics in Czech Republic and France according to 40 % of respondents from these countries and in Greece according to 30% of respondents. Milestones of history are the most often politicized issue in Slovenia (39 % of respondents) and Latvia (35 %). National security and current social affairs are the most often politicized phenomena in Estonia as indicated by 33 % of respondents.

Looking at countries in comparison, economic affairs are most often politicized in Greece (23 % of respondents), Slovenia (22 %) and France (20 %). They are least often politicized in Estonia (5 %) and Latvia (6 % of respondents). National security is least often politicized in Slovenia (indicated by 6 % respondents) comparing to other countries scaling between 20 % and 33 % of respondents. Milestones of history are the least often politicized in France, indicated by 10 % of respondents.

Chart 10: Most often politicized phenomena

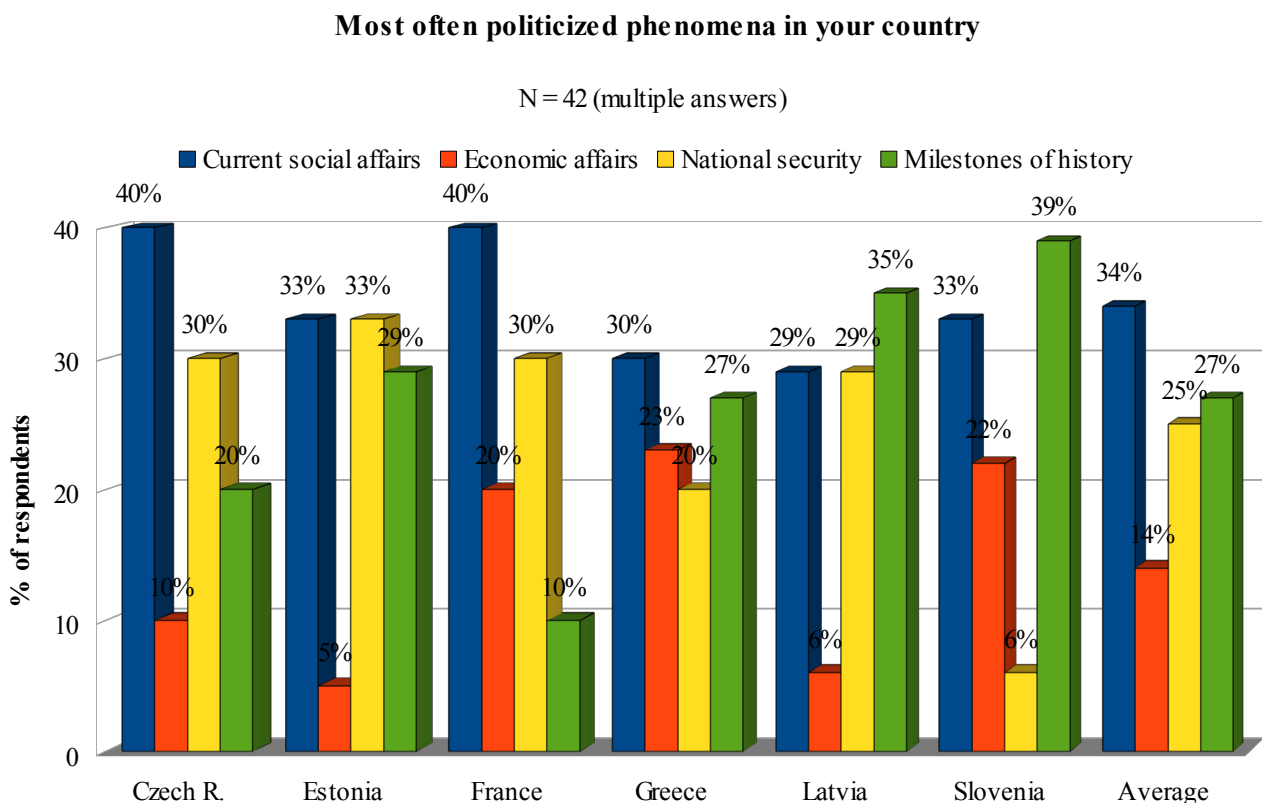


Table 2: Most often politicized phenomena (% of respondents)

	CZE	EST	FRA	GRE	LAT	SLO	M
Current social affairs (e.g. refugees, immigrants etc.)	40	33	40	30	29	33	34
Economic affairs (e.g. Brexit referendum campaign)	10	5	20	23	6	22	14
National security (e.g. soft power of Russia)	30	33	30	20	29	6	25
Milestones of history (e.g. regional separatism, border issues, minority status, interpretation of WWII)	20	29	10	27	35	39	27

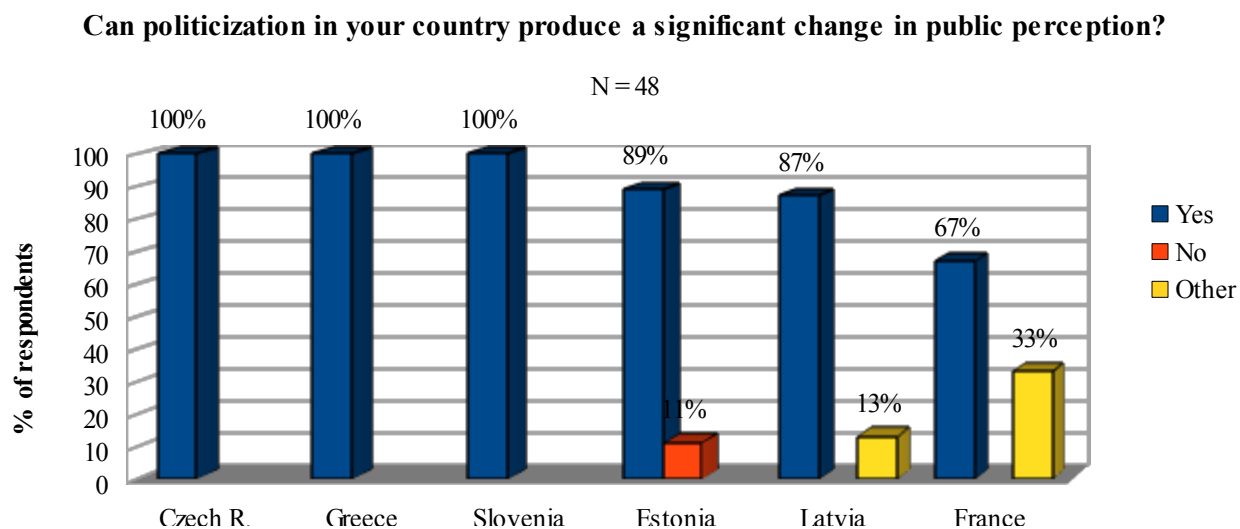
Survey participants shared an additional topics often politicized in their countries:

- Current social affairs: the reception of refugees / immigrants and the impact on economy and safety, social security, pension fund, LGBT community, concept of failed state, religious faith, extreme left / right groups, territorial fractures and urban-rural inequalities.
- Economic affairs: economic crisis/recession, austerity, poverty, corporate taxation, progressive taxation, capital controls, issues of privatization, state ownership of companies, growth, unemployment, decrease of pensions, basic salary, liberalism, leaving the EU.
- National security: foreign policy, terrorism and state of emergency, Greece relations with neighbouring countries, Russian disinformation and wars, information / electronic warfare, hybrid war, cybersecurity affairs, relationship with Russia, East and West relations, integration within NATO and EU.
- Milestones of history: Greek civil war, Russian revolution, interpretation of WWII Soviet liberation / occupation, post WWII events in Slovenia, Nazi collaboration, ethnic relations in historical perspective, interpretation of the First Republic, interpretations of communist period, interpretation of independence war, separation from ex Yugoslavia, entrance into the EU, border issues, FYROM name dispute, Greek - German relationships.

7.3 Politicization influence on public perception

All survey participants from Czech Republic, Greece and Slovenia and almost all from Estonia and Latvia consider politicization of certain things, events, social processes or milestones of history can produce a significant change in the way audience perceives certain phenomena in their countries.

Chart 11: Politicization influence on public perception



One third (33 %) of respondents from France does not regard politicization influence as an issue due to similar reasons already presented in section 4.1 (Politicization challenge in Europe).

7.4 Likelihood of causing harm to society by an intentional politicization

In general, survey participants assume different forms of intentional politicization of historical or current events are likely to cause harm to society in their country.

On average, intentional political abuse of the phenomena for political purposes is very likely to cause harm to society in their country according to survey participants (mean value 3,5 on 1 to 4 scale of measurement). This form of intentional politicization is highly likely to cause harm in France (M = 4) and Greece (M = 3,7), while it is likely to cause harm to society in Latvia (M = 3).

Politicization involving elements of creation of founding myths or narratives is the second form of intentional politicization that is likely to cause harm to society in surveyed countries (average M = 3,2). This form of politicization is most likely to cause harm to society in Greece (M = 3,5) and less likely in France (M = 2,8).

Intentional officialization of a particular discourse on the phenomena in a way to exclude other discourses is also likely to cause harm (M= 3,1). This form of intentional politicization is most likely to cause harm to society in Greece (M = 3,4) and and less likely in Latvia (M = 2,8).

Looking at countries in comparison, different forms of intentional politicization of historical or current events are most likely to cause harm to society in Greece (M = 3,5). In Latvia, the likelihood is the lowest comparing to other countries (M = 3).

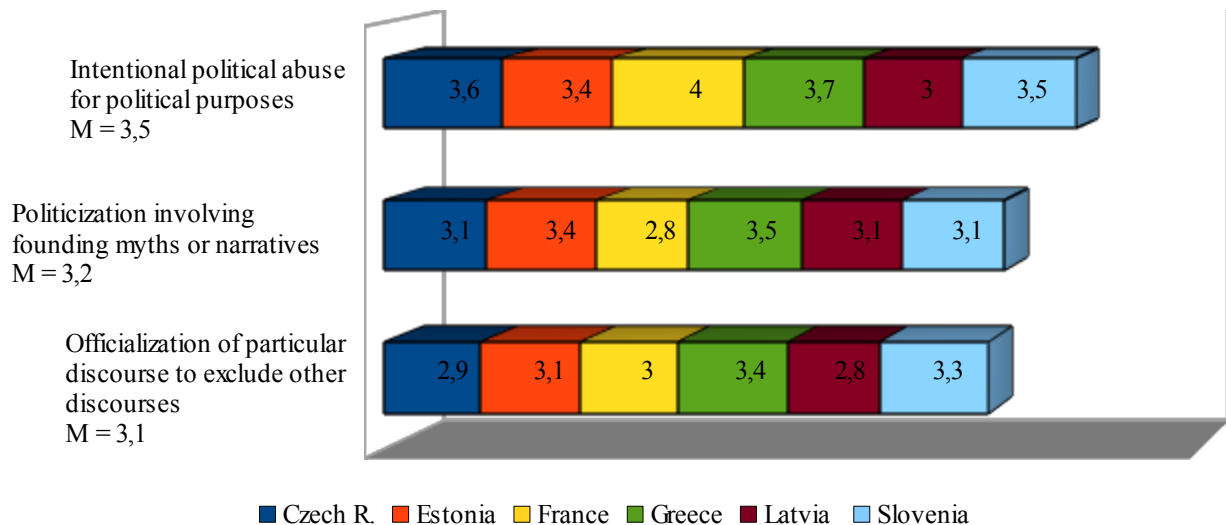
Survey participant pointed out promoting opinions as facts as an additional form of an intentional politicization.

Chart 12: Likelihood of causing harm to society by forms of intentional politicization

Forms of intentional politicization of events that are likely to cause harm to society in your country

N = 42

no harm = 1, not likely = 2, likely = 3, highly likely = 4



8 Agents creating and disseminating disinformation

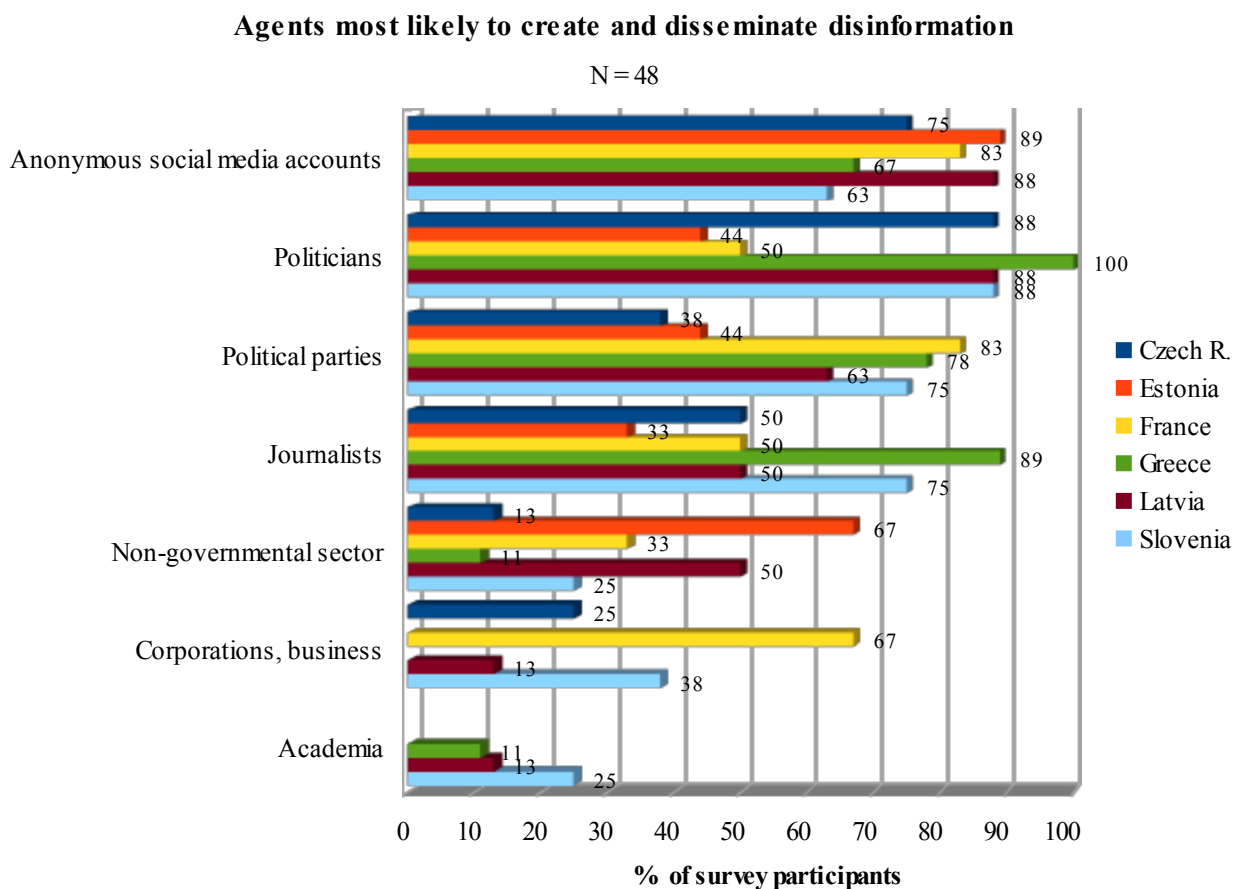
Anonymous social media accounts and politicians, followed by political parties are considered by majority of survey participants (78 % - 76 %) the most likely agents to create and disseminate disinformation. On the other hand, academia and corporations are considered the least likely agents dealing with disinformation.

Table 3: Agents creating and disseminating disinformation (% of respondents, multiple answers)

	CZE	EST	FRA	GRE	LAT	SLO	M
Anonymous social media accounts	75	89	83	67	88	63	78
Politicians	88	44	50	100	88	88	76
Political parties	38	44	83	78	63	75	64
Journalists	50	33	50	89	50	75	58
Non-governmental sector	13	67	33	11	50	25	33
Corporations, business	25	0	67	0	13	38	24
Academia	0	0	0	11	13	25	8

Majority of survey participants from Estonia (89 %), Latvia (88 %) and France (83 %) indicated anonymous social media accounts as the most likely agents to create and disseminate disinformation. Politicians in Greece (100%), Czech Republic, Latvia and Slovenia (all 88 %) are also considered most likely agents of disinformation. Political parties are most likely agents of disinformation in France (83 %), Greece (78 %) and Slovenia (75 %). Journalist in Greece (89 %) and Slovenia (75 %) are considered most likely agents of disinformation. Corporations in France and NGOs in Estonia are also considered as likely agents of disinformation by 67 % of respondents in each country.

Chart 13: Agents creating and disseminating disinformation per country



Survey participants shared an additional types of agents likely to create and disseminate disinformation: quasi-journalists, fake NGOs closely tied to political parties, church, social media users, intelligence agencies, non-anonymous social media accounts, Russian state-run media, private citizens, who believe passionately or can make an income off it.

9 Media of disinformation

This section presents descriptive analysis of data about different types of media people come across disinformation and data from country specific question on local news agencies in Greece.

9.1 Types of media people come across disinformation

Vast majority of survey participants (96 %) indicated social media and messaging apps as medium that people come across disinformation in their countries, followed by online blogs and forums (82 %). Other types of media recognized by respondents as a source of disinformation include information shared by friends and family (56 %), online only newspapers and news portals (49 %), video sharing platforms (49 %) and television (43 %).

Popular science literature, radio, news agencies and on-line podcast are not considered by survey participants as a medium of disinformation.

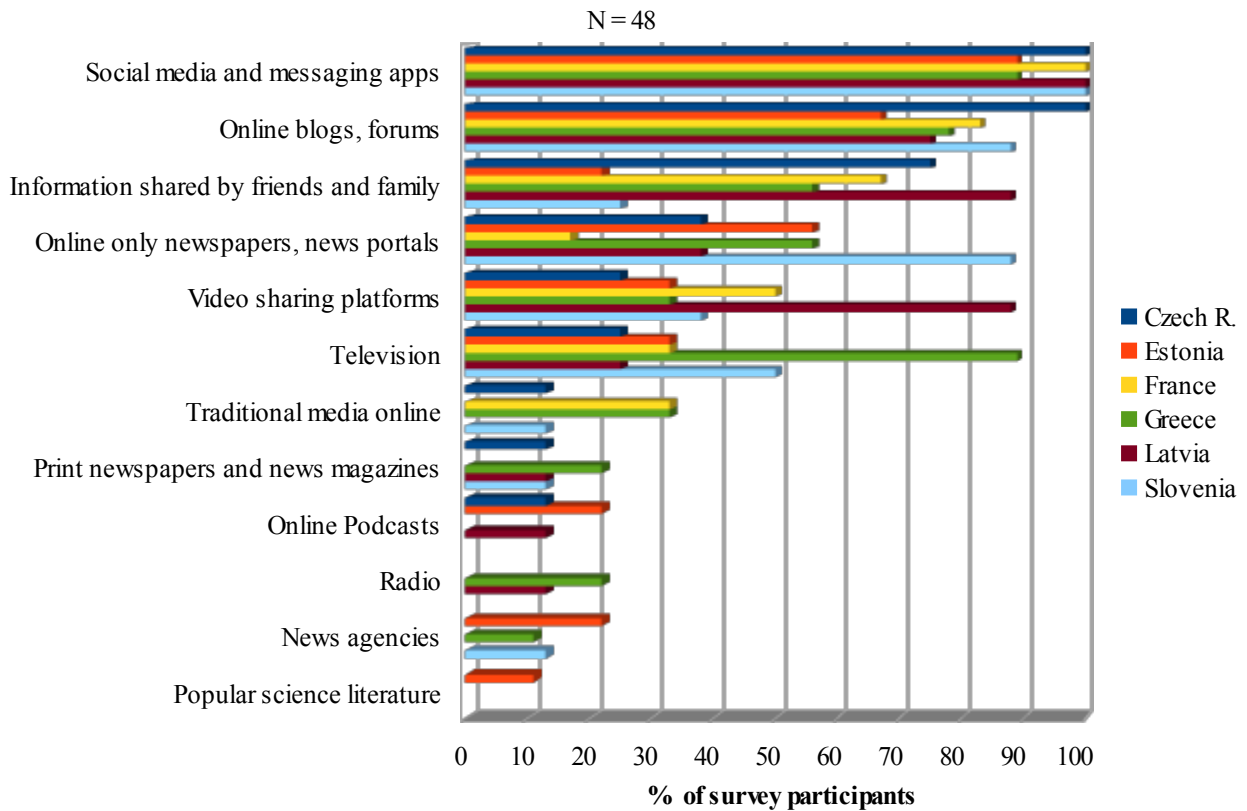
Table 4: Media of disinformation (% of respondents, multiple answers)

	CZE	EST	FRA	GRE	LAT	SLO	M
Social media and messaging apps	100	89	100	89	100	100	96
Online blogs, forums	100	67	83	78	75	88	82
Information shared by friends and family	75	22	67	56	88	25	56
Online only newspapers, news portals	38	56	17	56	38	88	49
Video sharing platforms	25	33	50	33	88	38	49
Television	25	33	33	89	25	50	43
Traditional media online	13	0	33	33	0	13	15
Print newspapers and news magazines	13	0	0	22	13	13	10
Online Podcasts	13	22	0	0	13	0	8
News agencies	0	22	0	11	0	13	8
Radio	0	0	0	22	13	0	6
Popular science literature	0	11	0	0	0	0	2

Looking at the countries in comparison, majority of respondents from Latvia (88 %) and Czech Republic (75 %) consider information shared by friends and family as source of disinformation. Online only newspapers and news portals are recognized as medium of disinformation by majority of respondents from Slovenia (88 %). Television in Greece (89 %) and video sharing platforms in Latvia (88 %) are also viewed as disinformation medium by majority of respondents in those countries.

Survey participants identified bulk emails targeting specific groups and chain emails as an additional medium of disinformation.

Chart 14: Types of media people come across disinformation per country



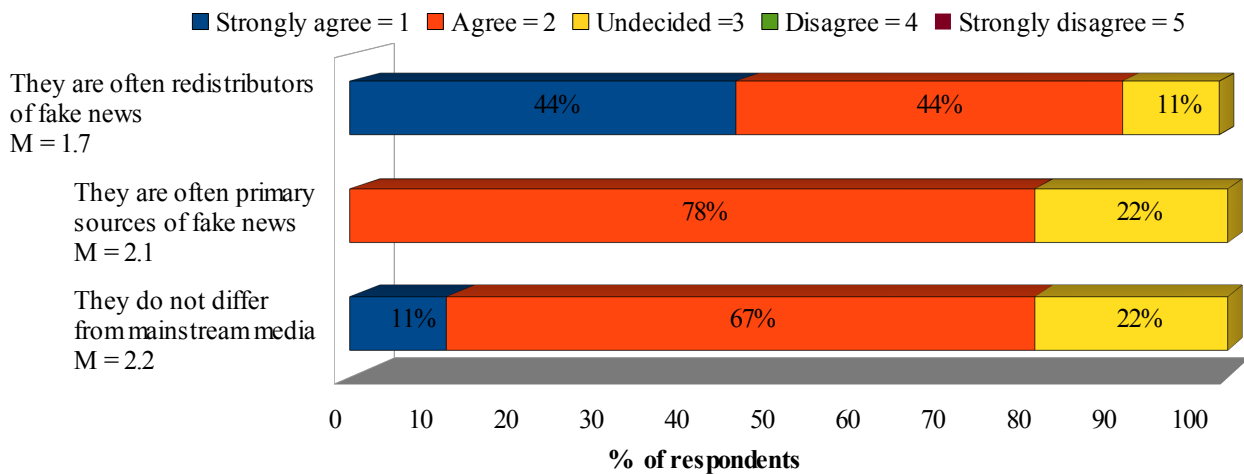
9.2 Local news agencies in Greece

Survey participants from Greece agree that local news agencies are also primary source of fake news. Little less than 44 % of them strongly agree that local news agencies are often redistributors of fake news and 78 % of them agree that local news agencies are often primary source of fake news. As such, they do not differ from mainstream media in Greece according to 67 % of respondents.

Chart 15: Local news agencies in Greece and fake news

Are local news agencies also primary sources and/or channels of fake news (Greece)?

N = 9



IV. Addressing the disinformation and fake news issue

The following section displays descriptive analysis of data about tackling the disinformation and fake news issue that includes the following aspects: measures for curtailing the adverse effects of disinformation, policies to address the disinformation, leading groups in curtailing the adverse effects of disinformation, online platforms responsibility in protecting their users from disinformation, online platforms efforts to protect its users from disinformation, the role of education in contesting disinformation in Greece and more active role of the EU in combating disinformation.

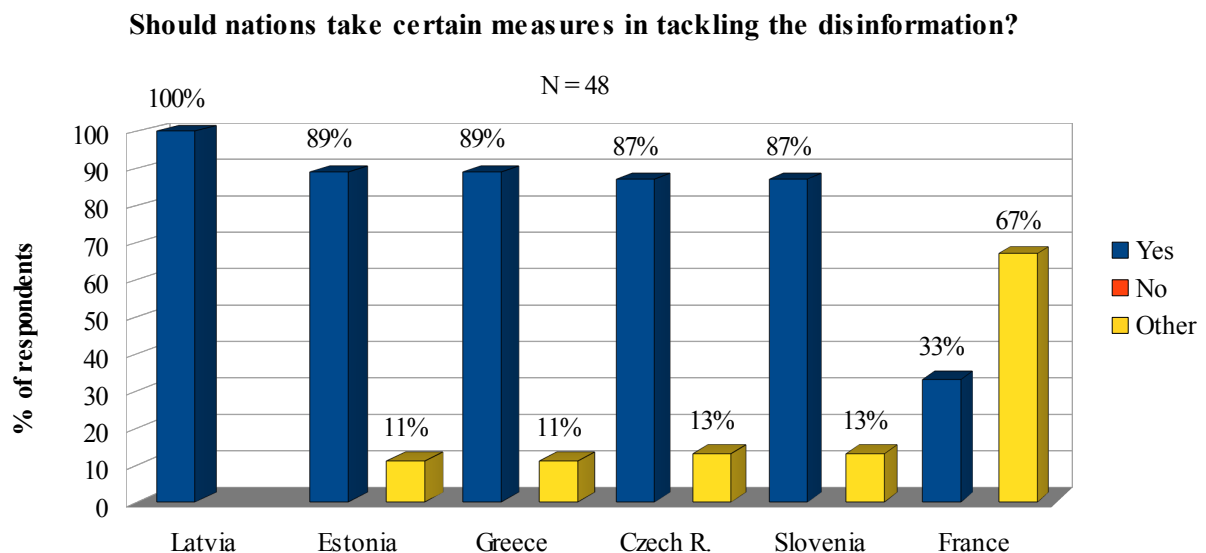
10 Nations taking certain measures in tackling the disinformation

All survey participants from Latvia and almost all from Estonia, Greece, Czech Republic and Slovenia agree that nations should take certain measures in tackling the disinformation. On the other hand, only one third (33 %) of respondents from France agree nations should take measures.

Respondents have risen several concerns about nations taking certain measures in tackling disinformation:

- societies should take measures, not nations;
- measures must avoid bans;
- measures should only be media education / literacy and critical thinking oriented, not justice or legal action oriented;
- due to suspicion into public authorities, public administration should not be agents of measures;
- measures must consider freedom of speech.

Chart 16: Nations taking certain measures in tackling the disinformation

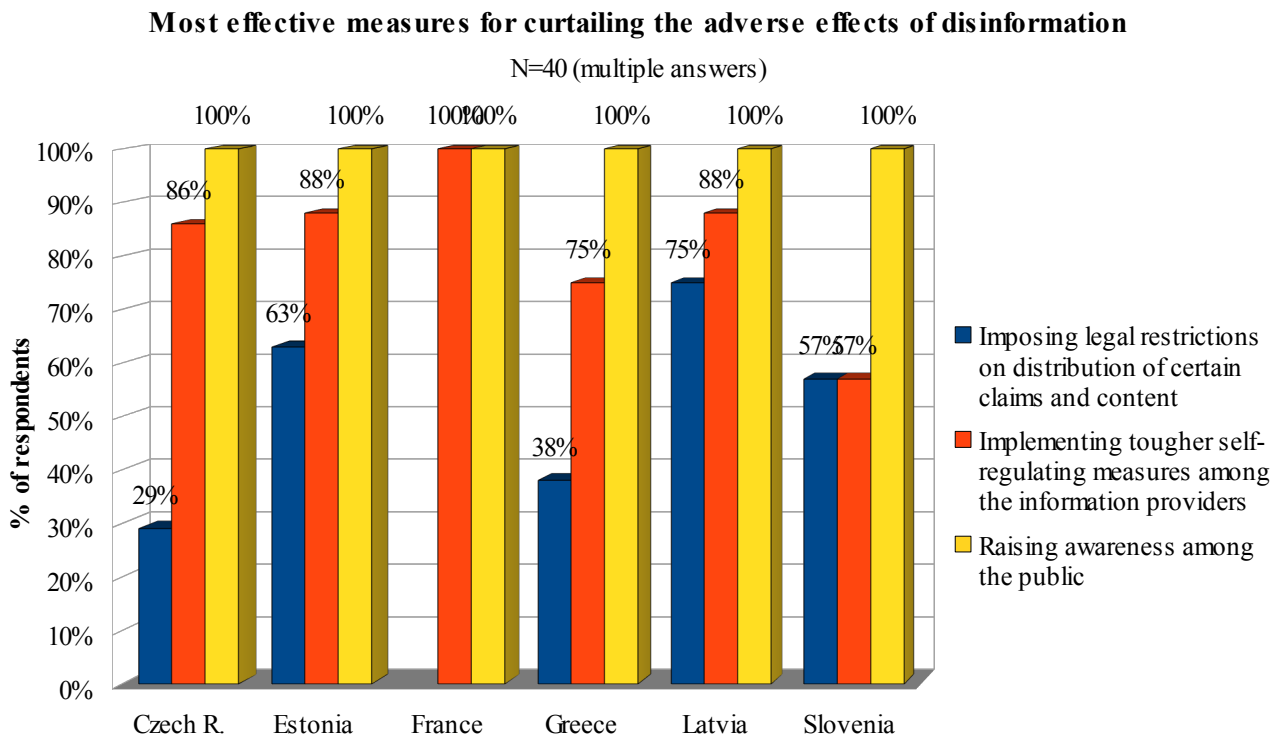


11 Measures for curtailing the adverse effects of disinformation

All survey participants consider raising awareness among the public the most effective measure for curtailing the adverse effects of disinformation, according to survey participants. Second most

effective measure identified by 82 % of respondents represents implementing tougher self-regulating measures that strengthen accountability, fact checking, collective knowledge and monitoring capacity of disinformation among the information providers. Imposing legal restrictions on distribution of certain claims and content is considered effective measure for curtailing the adverse effects of disinformation by 52 % of survey participants.

Chart 17: Measures for curtailing the adverse effects of disinformation per country



Looking at the countries in comparison, imposing legal restrictions on distribution of certain claims and content is recognized as an effective measure by 75 % of respondents from Latvia and by 29 % of respondents from Czech Republic. Implementing tougher self-regulating measures among the information providers is seen as an effective for curtailing disinformation by majority of respondents from Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece and Latvia. At the same time a little more than a half of respondents from Slovenia finds this measure effective.

Survey participants suggested the following additional measures for curtailing the adverse effects of disinformation:

- active initiative by the national media in refuting and taking a tougher stand;
- regulation and more responsibility on international level on social media (Facebook, Google, etc.);
- introducing media and information literacy horizontally to schools;
- capacity building for journalists to act as better qualified moderators;
- information literacy in schools;
- campaigns to make population aware of misinformation and its impact;
- active anti-propaganda (strategic narrative communication);
- legally accountability for sites that deliberately post fake info on vaccines and health;
- prohibition of Russian state supported sources (TV, radio stations, online platforms);
- payment for watching Russian TV channels.

12 Policies to address the disinformation

This section presents descriptive analysis of data about policies considered or already implemented to address the disinformation and policies that should be prioritized to address the disinformation more effectively in surveyed countries.

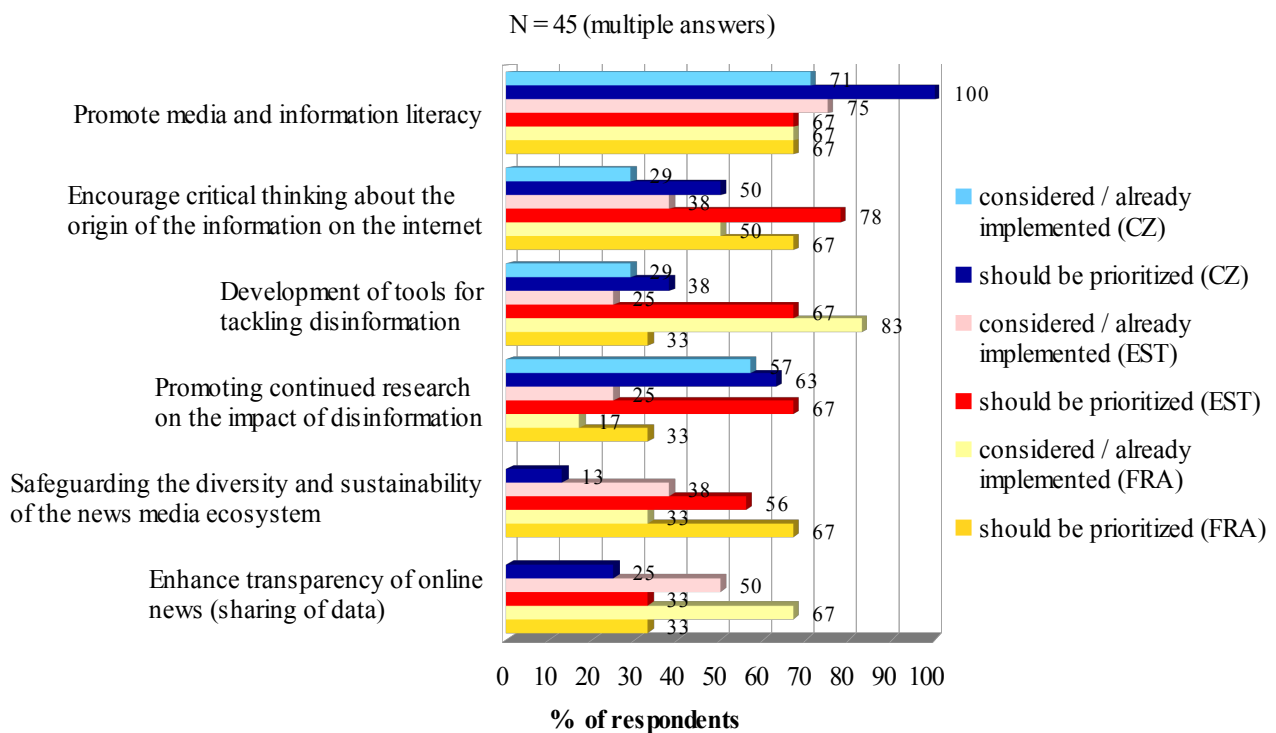
12.1 Policies considered or already implemented

The most commonly identified policies considered or already implemented to address the disinformation in surveyed countries are the following:

- promoting media and information literacy to counter disinformation and help users navigate the digital media environment (indicated by 63 % of respondents);
- developing tools for empowering users and journalists to tackle disinformation (indicated by 50 % of respondents);
- encouraging critical thinking about where the information on the internet is coming from (indicated by 47 % of respondents).

Looking at the countries in comparison, promoting media and information literacy has been to a greater extent considered or already implemented according to respondents from Latvia, Estonia and Czech Republic. Encouraging critical thinking about where the information on the internet is coming from has been to a greater extent considered or already implemented in Latvia. Majority of participants from Latvia and France indicated that development of tools for tackling disinformation has been considered or is already implemented in their country. Enhancing transparency of online news, involving an adequate and privacy-compliant sharing of data has been considered or is already implemented according to majority of respondents from France.

Chart 18: Policies to address the disinformation in Czech Republic, Estonia and France



Respondents from Latvia to a greater extent (67 %), followed by respondents from France (53 %) indicated various policies considered or already implemented to counter the disinformation, comparing to 31 % of respondents from Czech Republic and 34 % from Slovenia.

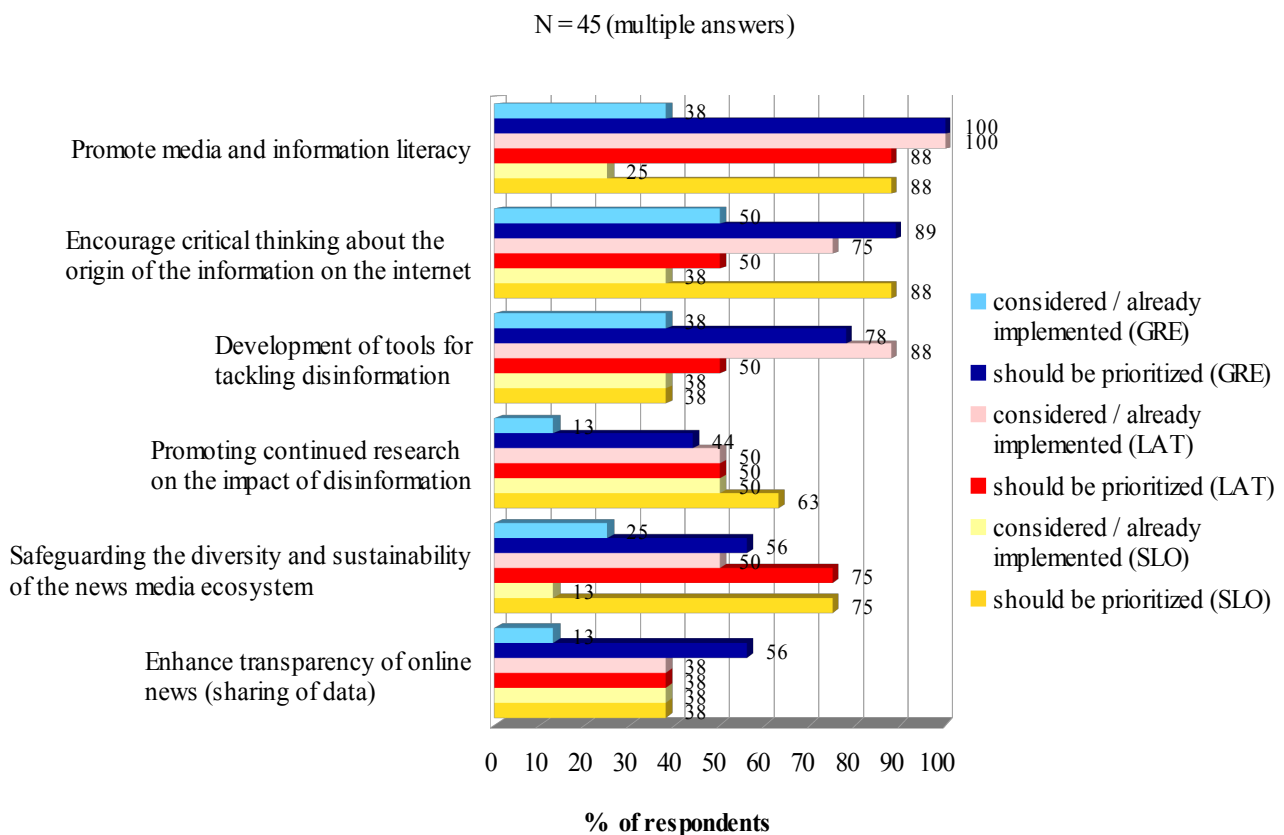
Survey participants indicated the following additional policies to be considered or are already implemented to address the disinformation in their countries: "fake news" law, imposing restrictions of certain content and code of journalists of the Republic of Slovenia.

12.2 Policies that should be prioritized

The most frequently recognized policies to address the disinformation more effectively in surveyed countries are the following:

- promoting media and information literacy and encouraging critical thinking about the origin of the information on the internet (indicated by 85 % of respondents);
- encouraging critical thinking about where the information on the internet is coming from (indicated by 70 % of respondents);
- safeguarding the diversity and sustainability of the news media ecosystem (indicated by 57 % of respondents).

Chart 19: Policies to address the disinformation more effectively in Greece, Latvia and Slovenia



Looking at the countries in comparison, the following policies have been most often identified by

survey participants as a priority to address the disinformation in their countries:

- promoting media and information literacy and encouraging critical thinking about the origin of the information on the internet should be prioritized in Czech Republic, Greece, Latvia and Slovenia;
- encouraging critical thinking about where the information on the internet is coming from should be prioritized in Greece, Slovenia and Estonia;
- development of tools for empowering users and journalists to tackle disinformation should be prioritized in Greece;
- safeguarding the diversity and sustainability of the news media ecosystem should be prioritized in Slovenia.

The largest disparity between considering or already implemented policies and prioritizing policies to address disinformation is present in Greece and Slovenia.

Survey participants indicated the following additional policies that should be prioritized to address the disinformation more effectively in their countries:

- regulation of social media platforms, control of the priorities of their algorithms (same kind of regulation like in the banking sector or of utility sector);
- enhanced transparency of the advertising economy online (e.g. Facebook and Google ads agency);
- encourage massive appropriation of skills such as rhetoric, speaking in public, public debate and collective decision making;
- own active strategic communication, abandoning the victim's mentality;
- the introduction of tools to effectively assume responsibility for creating and disseminating disinformation.

Table 5: Policies considered / implemented and policies prioritized to address the disinformation more effectively (% of respondents, multiple answers)

	considered / implemented (CZE)	should be prioritized (CZE)	considered / implemented (EST)	should be prioritized (EST)	considered / implemented (FRA)	should be prioritized (FRA)	considered / implemented (GRE)	should be prioritized (GRE)	considered / implemented (LAT)	should be prioritized (LAT)	considered / implemented (SLO)	should be prioritized (SLO)	M
Promote media and information literacy (M = 74)	71	100	75	67	67	67	38	100	100	88	25	88	63
													85
Encourage critical thinking about the origin of the information on the internet (M = 59)	29	50	38	78	50	67	50	89	75	50	38	88	47
													70
Development of tools for tackling disinformation (M = 50)	29	38	25	67	83	33	38	78	88	50	38	38	50
													50
Promoting continued research on the impact of disinformation (M = 44)	57	63	25	67	17	33	13	44	50	50	50	63	35
													53
Safeguarding the diversity and sustainability of the news media ecosystem (M = 42)	0	13	38	56	33	67	25	56	50	75	13	75	27
													57
Enhance transparency of online news (sharing of data) (M = 35)	0	25	50	33	67	33	13	56	38	38	38	38	34
													37
M	31	48	42	61	53	50	30	71	67	59	34	65	

13 Leading groups in curtailing the adverse effects of disinformation

Two thirds (67 %) of survey participants indicated media / journalists as a group that should take the leading role for curtailing the adverse effects of disinformation in their country, followed by media policy makers (54 %). Less common but still relevant groups in addressing disinformation effects are academia (44 %), state regulatory bodies (44 %) and non-governmental sector (43%).

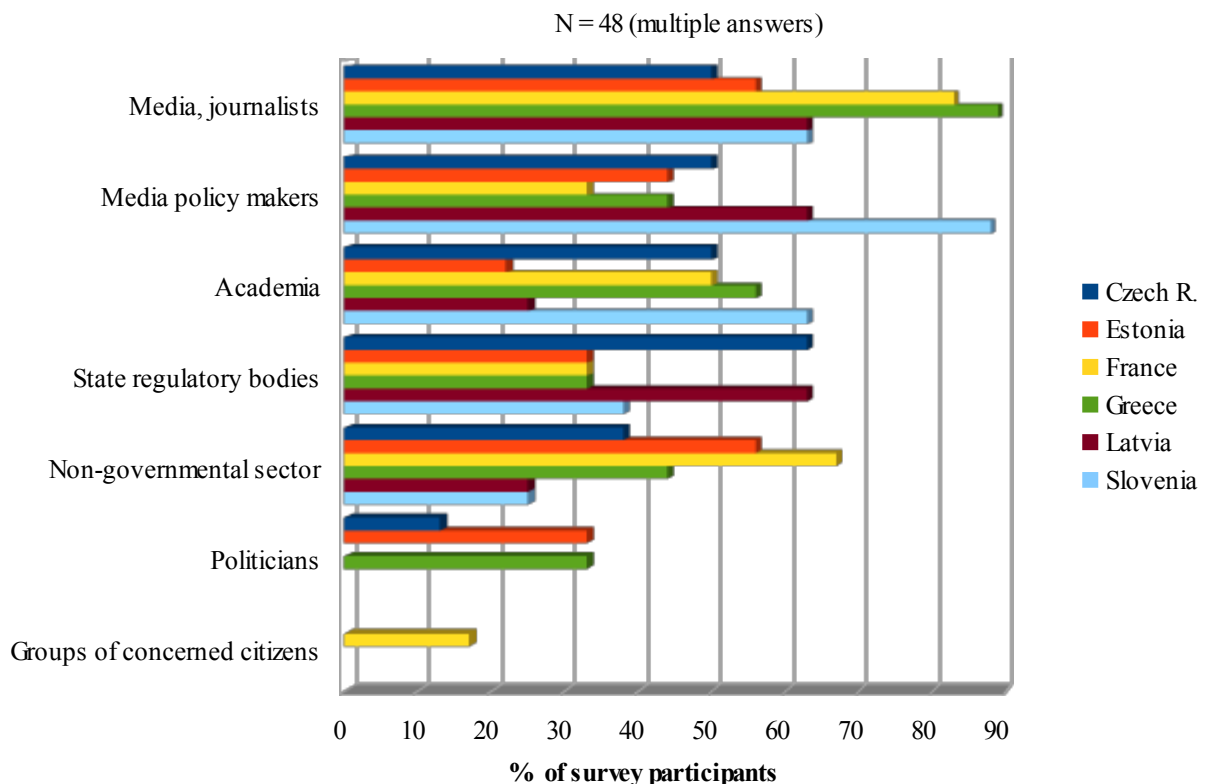
Table 6: Leading groups in curtailing the adverse effects of disinformation (% of respondents, multiple answers)

	CZE	EST	FRA	GRE	LAT	SLO	M
Media, journalists	50	56	83	89	63	63	67
Media policy makers	50	44	33	44	63	88	54
Academia	50	22	50	56	25	63	44
State regulatory bodies	63	33	33	33	63	38	44
Non-governmental sector	38	56	67	44	25	25	43
Politicians	13	33	0	33	0	0	13
Groups of concerned citizens	0	0	17	0	0	0	3

Media and journalists are considered leading group by majority of respondents from Greece (89 %) and France (83 %). Media policy makers are recognized as a leading group in Slovenia (88 % of respondents). Significant part of respondents (63 %) in Czech Republic and Latvia said that state regulatory bodies are relevant groups curtailing the adverse effects of disinformation, while in France NGO sector is considered relevant by 67 % of respondents. Academia is recognized as a relevant group by 63 % of respondents from Slovenia.

Survey participants indicated the following additional groups that should take the leading role for curtailing the adverse effects of disinformation: Telco companies, education system, teachers and law enforcement institutions.

Chart 20: Groups that should lead in curtailing the adverse effects of disinformation per country



14 Online platforms responsibility in protecting their users from disinformation

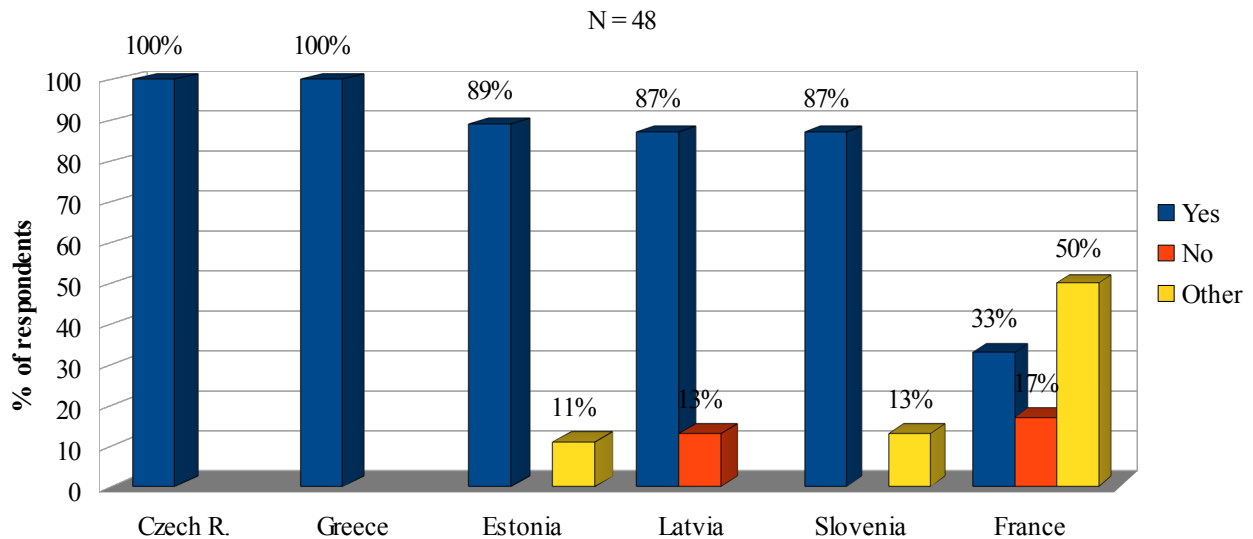
All survey participants from Czech Republic and Greece and almost all participants from Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia agree that online platforms (social media platforms, news platforms, online forums etc.) should assume greater responsibilities in protecting their users from disinformation. On the other hand, only one third (33 %) of respondents from France agree.

Respondents have risen several concerns about online platforms assuming greater responsibilities in protecting their users from disinformation:

- greater responsibilities mean greater power for online platforms;
- online platforms are private companies working only for lucrative profits, not the truth;
- greater responsibilities should not lead to increased censorship;

Chart 21: Online platforms responsibility in protecting their users from disinformation

Should online platforms assume greater responsibilities in protecting users from disinformation?



15 Online platforms efforts to protect its users from disinformation

Ensure transparency about sponsored content, in particular political and issue-based advertising is recognized by majority of survey participants (91 %) as the main effort that should be stepped-up by online platforms in protecting its users from disinformation. Other efforts indicated by majority of respondents are an effective closing of fake accounts (69 %), providing trusted fact-checking organisations and academia with access to platform data via application programming interfaces (66 %), providing users with easily-accessible tools to report disinformation (63 %) and ensure that online services include safeguards against disinformation, such as the information on the algorithms that prioritise the display of content (62 %).

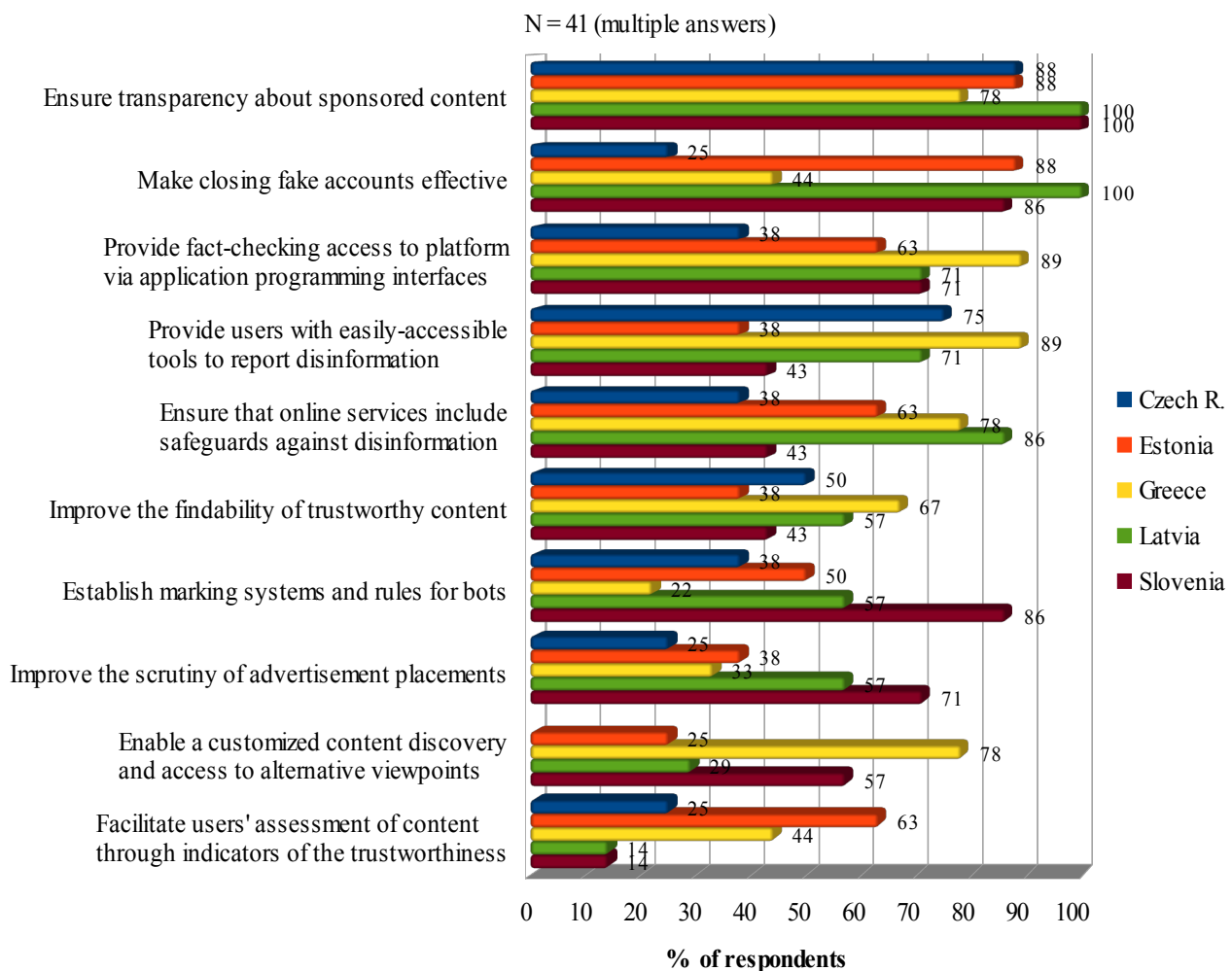
Table 7: Online platforms efforts to protect its users from disinformation (% of respondents, multiple answers)

	CZE	EST	GRE	LAT	SLO	M
Ensure transparency about sponsored content	88	88	78	100	100	91
Make closing fake accounts effective	25	88	44	100	86	69
Provide fact-checking access to platform via application programming interfaces	38	63	89	71	71	66

Provide users with easily-accessible tools to report disinformation	75	38	89	71	43	63
Ensure that online services include safeguards against disinformation	38	63	78	86	43	62
Improve the findability of trustworthy content	50	38	67	57	43	51
Establish marking systems and rules for bots	38	50	22	57	86	51
Improve the scrutiny of advertisement placements	25	38	33	57	71	45
Enable a customized content discovery and access to alternative viewpoints	0	25	78	29	57	38
Facilitate users' assessment of content through indicators of the trustworthiness	25	63	44	14	14	32

Ensuring transparency about sponsored content is the most commonly expected effort of an online platforms indicated by respondents from Latvia, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Estonia. An effective closing of fake accounts is considered crucial effort by survey participants in Latvia, Estonia and and Slovenia. Respondents from Greece highlighted online platform efforts to provide fact-checking access to platform via application programming interfaces, users easily-accessible tools to report disinformation and customized content discovery and access to alternative viewpoints. Ensuring that online services include safeguards against disinformation and improving the findability of trustworthy content is important for participants from Latvia, while establishing marking systems and rules for bots is crucial for respondents from Slovenia.

Chart 22: Online platforms efforts to protect its users from disinformation per country



An additional effort expected from online platform, has been suggest by survey participants aiming at creating media and news literacy training sections on online platforms.

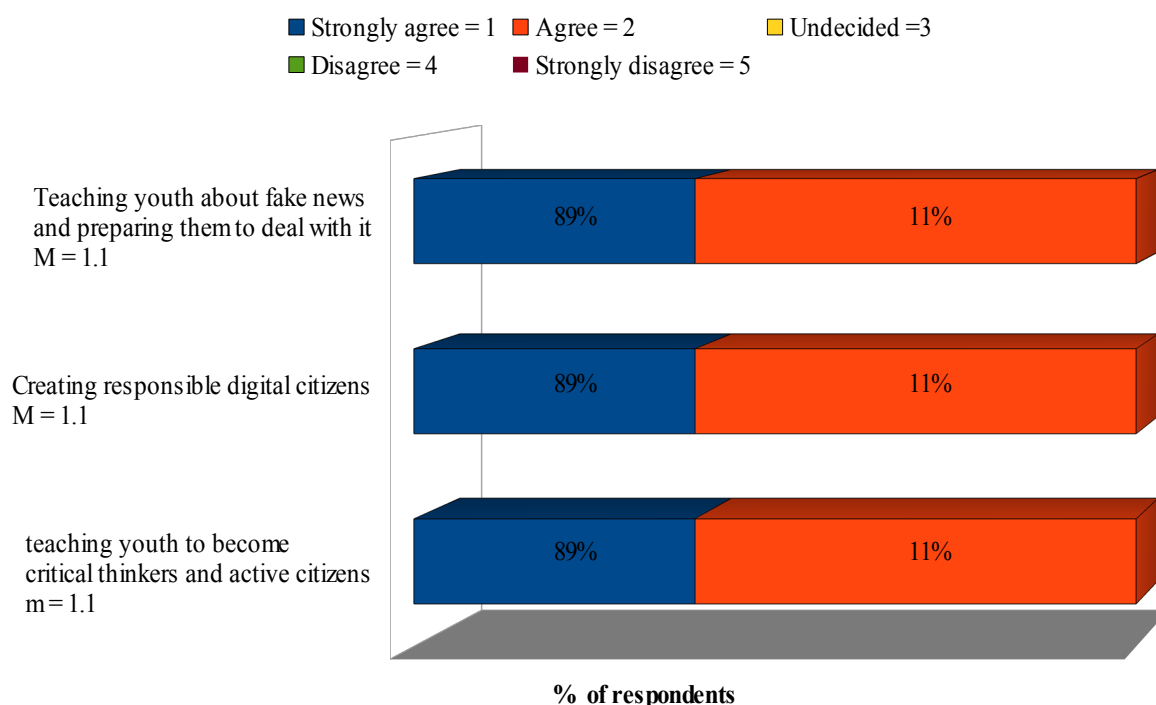
16 The role of education in contesting disinformation in Greece

Survey participants from Greece strongly agree on the role of education in contesting fake news /disinformation and the preparation in Greece. 89 % of respondents from Greece strongly agree that education should teach youth about fake news and preparing them to deal with it, create responsible digital citizens and teach youth the necessary knowledge, values and attitudes that help them be critical thinkers and active citizens.

Chart 23: The role of education in contesting disinformation in Greece

What could be the role of youth education in the combat against fake news /disinformation (Greece)?

N = 9



17 Empowering the EU for a more active role in combating disinformation

The majority survey participants (88 %) indicated that the EU should be empowered to take a more active role in combating fake news/misinformation/politicization of information. The most favourable towards empowering the EU are participants from Estonia and Latvia, while participants from Czech Republic and Slovenia are less favourable.

Survey respondents provided several comments, suggestions and measures on empowering the EU for a more active role in combating disinformation:

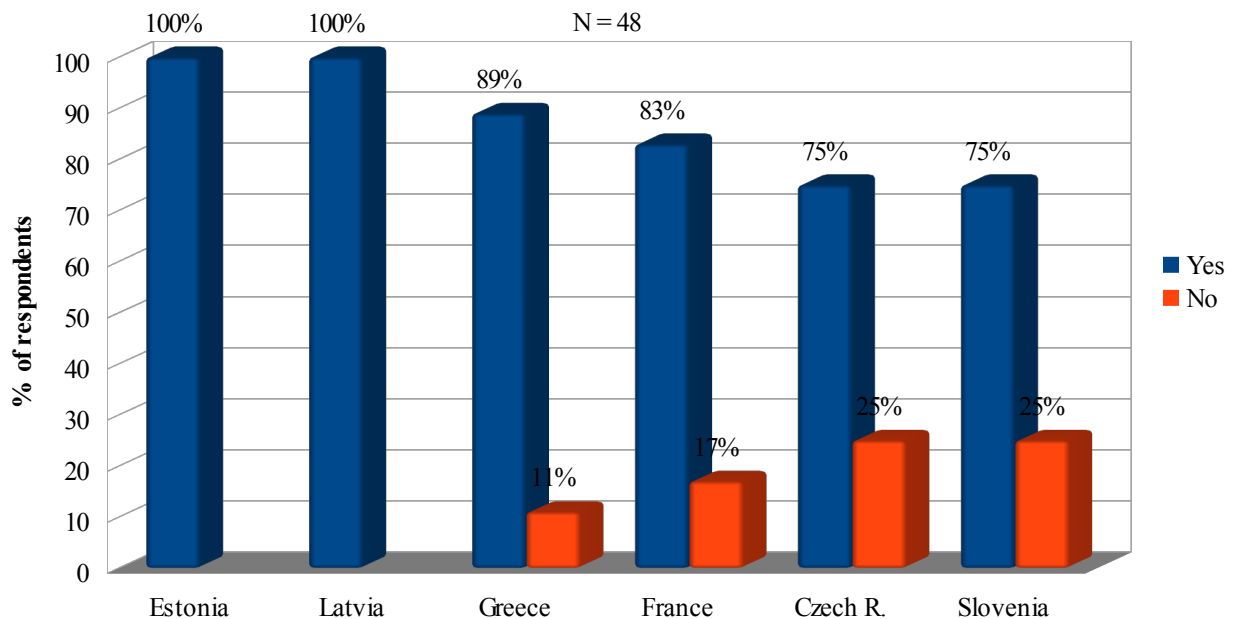
- Soft measures: awareness raising campaigns, supporting research projects, improving media literacy, public education on media, funding media organizations, NGOs, think-thanks and

fact-checking groups addressing disinformation, creating a tool that publishes a black list of articles or media, a common information fact checking service, creating a media in the Russian language operating in the Baltic region with an impact on the Russian Federation, EU right to label some media outlets as propaganda, raising special cases of fake news and helping people understand their impact, further support for investigative journalism, considering news literacy in legislation and projects.

- **Regulative measures:** new rules regarding the organisation of the advertising market online, laws that regulate the messy sphere of misinformation and disinformation, creating a cross-national regulation of social media platforms, rules about online media, regulating big corporations, setting up rules and legislation to limit adverse impact of disinformation on elections and political campaigns, developing common regulation in the field, strict regulations and tactical actions against misinformation distribution actions.
- **Policy measures:** EU level agreement on a general need to address the disinformation problem and establish fundamental principles, specific directions that EU members have to implement in a deadline, implementing special policies (in media sphere) with serious financial ground, putting in place rules about prohibited connections between political parties (politicians) and media ownership or demanding greater transparency about it.

Chart 24: Empowering the EU for a more active role in combating disinformation

More active role of the EU in combating fake news/misinformation/politicization of information



V. E-democracy tools to address the disinformation

This section presents descriptive analysis of data about e-democracy tools used in surveyed countries to minimise the negative effects of the disinformation and e-democracy tools that should be used more.

18 E-democracy tools used in addressing the disinformation

Tools aimed at reporting the disinformation and specific platforms for making sound decisions before voting are on average the most common e-democracy tools used to minimise the negative effects of the disinformation in surveyed countries. The former had been indicated by 53 % of survey participants and the later by 45 % of them. One third (36 %) of participants indicated specific platforms for electoral oversight as the third most common e-democracy tool used.

Table 8: E-democracy tools used in addressing the disinformation (% of respondents, multiple answers)

	CZE	EST	FRA	GRE	LAT	SLO	M
Tools aimed at reporting the disinformation	50	56	50	38	100	25	53
Specific platforms for making sound decisions before voting	13	56	50	50	63	38	45
Specific platforms for electoral oversight	25	33	67	13	50	25	36
Trusted fact-checking organisations and academia with access to platform data	0	22	83	25	38	0	28
Content trustworthiness rating systems in line with journalistic principles	0	0	83	13	38	0	22
Solutions aimed to increase the findability of trustworthy content	0	22	0	25	25	0	12
M (country)	15	32	56	27	52	15	

Looking at the countries in comparison, tools aimed at reporting the disinformation are commonly available in Latvia. In other surveyed countries these tools are used to a lesser degree. Specific platforms for making sound decisions before voting are above average used in Latvia, Estonia, France and Greece. Specific platforms for electoral oversight, content trustworthiness rating systems in line with journalistic principles and trusted fact-checking organisations and academia with access to platform data are above average present in France.

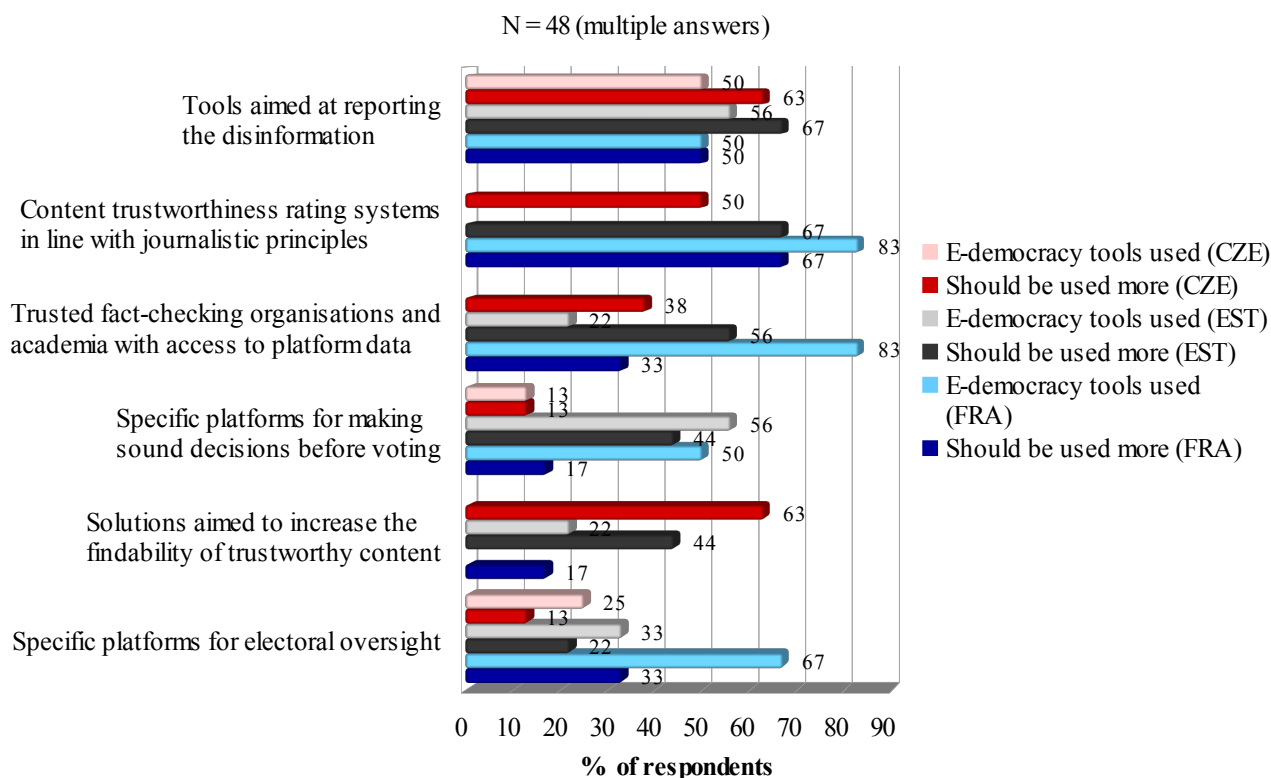
France and Latvia have above average share of survey participants indicating specific e-democracy tools used in their country to minimise the negative effects of the disinformation. On the contrary, Czech Republic and Slovenia have the smallest share of survey participants indicating e-democracy tools usage for addressing disinformation in their countries.

Survey participant provided the various examples of e-democracy tools for addressing disinformation: collaborative fact-checking tool Captainfact, initiative Kust sa tead? (How do you know)?, the equivalent of UK's initiative Bring your evidence, tools for reporting the disinformation on international platforms, site that reports news hoaxes (without using elaborated tools).

Some survey participants stressed non-existence of e-democracy tools for addressing disinformation in their countries besides a few individual efforts of few media and NGO in fact checking.

Chart 25: E-democracy tools to address the disinformation in Czech Republic, Estonia and France

E-democracy tools used / should be used more to minimise effects of the disinformation



19 E-democracy tools to be used more to minimise the disinformation

The following e-democracy tools to be used more to minimise the disinformation are suggested by the majority of survey participants: content trustworthiness rating systems in line with journalistic principles (71 %), tools aimed at reporting the disinformation (70%) and trusted fact-checking organisations and academia with access to platform data (59 %).

Table 9: E-democracy tools that should be used to minimise the disinformation (% of respondents, multiple answers)

	CZE	EST	FRA	GRE	LAT	SLO	M
Content trustworthiness rating systems in line with journalistic principles	50	67	67	89	63	88	71
Tools aimed at reporting the disinformation	63	67	50	89	75	75	70
Trusted fact-checking organisations and academia with access to platform data	38	56	33	78	75	75	59
Solutions aimed to increase the findability of trustworthy content	63	44	17	67	75	38	51
Specific platforms for making sound decisions before voting	13	44	17	56	38	13	30
Specific platforms for electoral oversight	13	22	33	56	25	25	29
M (per country)	40	50	36	73	59	52	

Looking at the countries in comparison, the following e-democracy tools should be used more to minimise the negative effects of the disinformation per surveyed country:

- content trustworthiness rating systems in line with journalistic principles in Greece, Slovenia, Estonia, France and Latvia;
- tools aimed at reporting the disinformation in Greece, Latvia, Slovenia, Estonia and Czech Republic);
- trusted fact-checking organisations and academia with access to platform data in Greece, Latvia, Slovenia in Estonia;
- solutions aimed to increase the findability of trustworthy content in Latvia, Greece and Czech Republic).

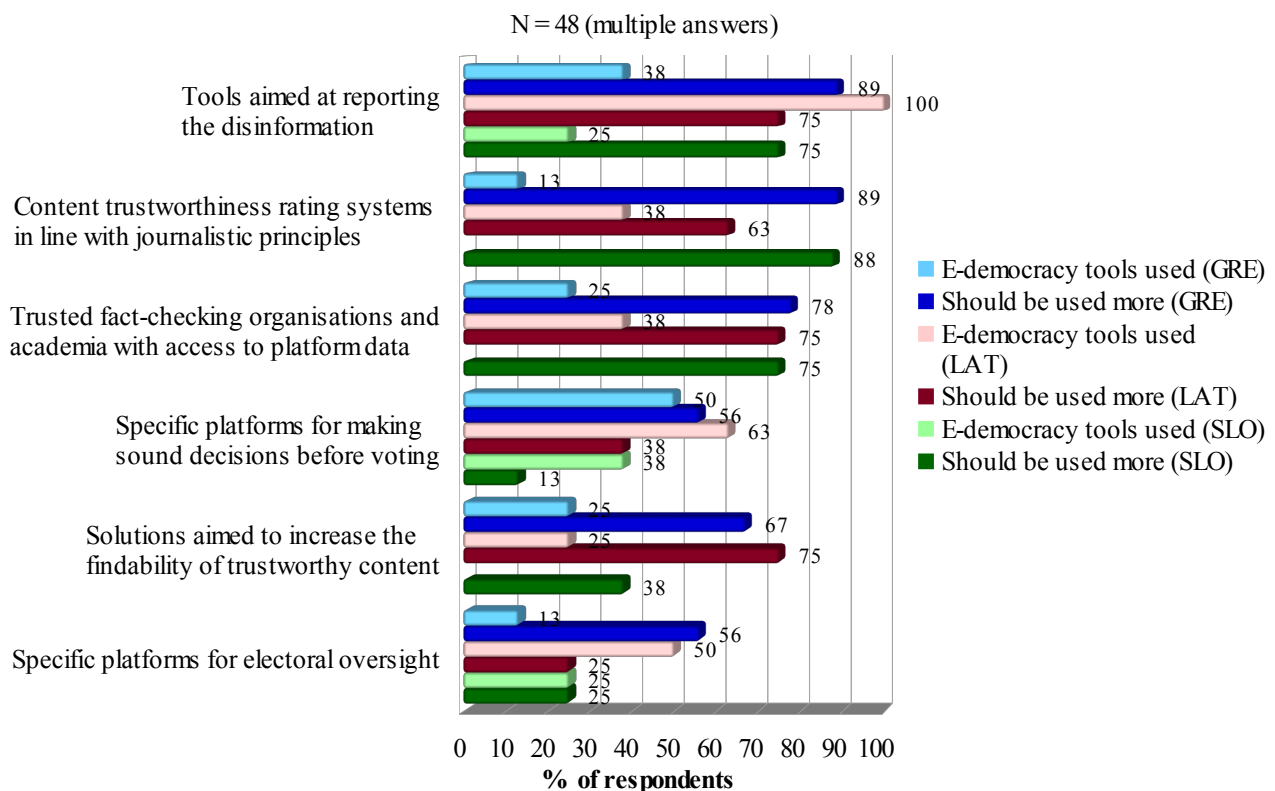
Greece (73 %), Latvia (59 %) and Slovenia (52 %) have the largest share of survey participants indicating particular e-democracy tools should be used more to minimise the negative effects of the disinformation in their countries. On the contrary, France has the smallest share of survey participants (36 %) indicating specific e-democracy tools should be used more.

Survey participant provided an examples of two additional e-democracy tool that should be used more: tools aimed at controlling social media platforms (e.g. who is the owner of anonymous Facebook page, which historical posts have been paid for, who paid for these posts etc.) and solutions that empower citizen by education or by giving them tools to investigate.

Some survey participants also stressed that tools will not solve the problem of negative effects of disinformation and that reporting disinformation does not help when the disinformation come from Russian TV.

Chart 26: E-democracy tools to address the disinformation in Greece, Latvia and Slovenia

E-democracy tools used / should be used more to minimise effects of the disinformation



VI. Key findings from descriptive analysis

The following key findings have been extracted from the descriptive analysis of the survey data:

The scope of disinformation and fake news issue

- 63 % of survey respondents indicated that disinformation in their countries is definitely a problem.
- Respondents come across news of information that they believe misrepresent reality or is false at least once a week on average.
- On average, respondents feel personally confident to identify news or information that misrepresent reality or is false.
- Respondents are on average not very confident in their countrymen's ability to identify news or information that misrepresent reality or is false.
- An average share of population in surveyed countries that cannot identify disinformation is 46 %.
- Migration policies are an area of public life that is harmed to a greatest extent by an intentional disinformation, followed by trust in public institutions, trust in elected representatives and voting decisions.
- Respondents recognize politicization of certain things, events, processes and milestones of present or past as a considerable challenge in the social and political life in contemporary Europe.
- Current social issues (refugees, immigrants) are the most often politicized topic, followed by milestones of history and national security.
- Politicization of certain things, events, social processes or milestones of history can produce a significant change in the way audience perceives certain phenomena in their countries.
- Intentional political abuse of the phenomena for political purposes is very likely to cause harm to society in their countries according to survey respondents.
- Anonymous social media accounts and politicians, followed by political parties, are the most likely agents to create and disseminate disinformation.
- Social media and messaging apps, followed by online blogs and forums are most often indicated by respondents as the media in which people come across disinformation.

Addressing the disinformation and fake news issue

- Majority of respondents agree that nations should take certain measures in tackling the disinformation.

- Raising awareness among the public is considered by respondents the most effective measure for curtailing the adverse effects of disinformation, followed by implementing tougher self-regulating measures that strengthen accountability, fact checking, collective knowledge and monitoring capacity of disinformation among the information providers.
- Commonly identified policies considered or already implemented to address the disinformation in surveyed countries are promoting media and information literacy to counter disinformation and help users navigate the digital media environment.
- Promoting media and information literacy and encouraging critical thinking about the origin of the information on the internet are the most often preferred policies to address the disinformation in surveyed countries.
- Media / journalists and media policy makers are most often recognized as groups that should take the leading role for curtailing the adverse effects of disinformation.
- Majority of respondents agree that online platforms should assume greater responsibilities in protecting their users from disinformation.
- Ensuring transparency about sponsored content is the most frequently indicated effort that should be stepped-up by online platforms in protecting its users from disinformation, followed by an effective closing of fake accounts and providing fact-checking access to platform via application programming interfaces.
- The majority survey participants (88 %) indicated that the EU should be empowered to take a more active role in combating fake news/misinformation/politicization of information.

E-democracy tools to address the disinformation

- Tools aimed at reporting the disinformation and specific platforms for making sound decisions before voting are the most frequent e-democracy tools used in surveyed countries to minimise the negative effects of the disinformation.
- Suggested e-democracy tools to be used more to minimise the disinformation in surveyed countries are content trustworthiness rating systems in line with journalistic principles and tools aimed at reporting the disinformation, followed by trusted fact-checking organisations and academia with access to platform data.

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