



D5.1: Dissemination, Communication, Exploitation Plan-v2

WP5

Dissemination Level: Public

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ABSTRACT

About the project

The ATHENA project, "An exposition on THE forEign information mAnipulation and interference", embodies a focused initiative aimed at addressing the multifaceted challenges presented by Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI). Over the course of 36 months, ATHENA is analysing 32 FIMI case studies, delving into the tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP) employed by perpetrators to understand their mechanics and societal implications. With a consortium comprising cybersecurity firms, academic institutions, fact-checkers and associations spanning Europe, from Ukraine to Ireland, and from Sweden to Cyprus, ATHENA represents a collaborative effort to bolster Europe's resilience against FIMI. Central to its mission is the development of innovative countermeasures tailored to thwart the evolving strategies of malicious actors, employing cutting-edge technologies and methodologies to equip stakeholders with the tools necessary to detect, mitigate, and neutralise the threat posed by foreign information manipulation.

About this deliverable

The updated Dissemination, Communication and Exploitation Plan for the ATHENA project is presented in this revised deliverable to be submitted at M15. The final deliverable update is scheduled for M36. The project's communication and dissemination strategies will be outlined across 13 areas, each serving a specific purpose whenever needed.

The objectives of the deliverable are detailed in Section 1 while Section 2 focuses on contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Section 3 is a gender impact assessment. Section 4 focuses on updating the identification of stakeholder groups and their needs for a meaningful engagement. Section 5 covers outreach efforts. Section 6 revisits and refines the key messages, ensuring their relevance and effectiveness over time.

Sections 7 and 8 remain dedicated to communication and dissemination methods and channels, respectively, which are critical for effectively reaching the target audience. Section 9 provides guidance on dissemination and communication management, guaranteeing seamless execution while Section 10 evaluates Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the effectiveness of outreach activities. Section 11 focuses on evaluation and monitoring, enabling continuing improvement and Section 12 will present the first version of the exploitation strategy. Section 13 concludes the deliverable by summarising key insights and recommendations. The goal of this methodical approach is still to maximise the project's effect, foster meaningful involvement, and optimise communication and distribution efforts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This deliverable presents the updated Dissemination, Communication and Exploitation Plans for ATHENA, serving as a strategic roadmap in disseminating project findings, engaging stakeholders and maximising impact. Over the course of 36 months, ATHENA aims to confront the multifaceted challenges posed by Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) through meticulous analysis of 32 FIMI case studies, the development of countermeasures, legal and regulatory recommendations, among other things. With a robust consortium spanning Europe, ATHENA represents a collaborative effort to bolster the continent's resilience against FIMI, involving cybersecurity firms, academic institutions, fact-checkers and associations.

This report (v. 2) updates the progress in implementing the plans since submission of the first version of D5.1 in April 2024.

Adopting a multi-channel approach, ATHENA ensures seamless integration between its communication platforms (website, blog posts, webinars) and social media channels (X (ex-Twitter), LinkedIn and YouTube). This interconnectedness ensures consistent dissemination of content across the platforms, with channels linking back to one another. We include links to all ATHENA channels in all webpage descriptions, along with the mandatory inclusion of a statement acknowledging funding sources. Active engagement among ATHENA partners' channels and individual team members, collaboration with related projects' channels and integration of various content formats with links to ATHENA's social media channels enhance our dissemination efforts.

This report refers to the performance indicators (PIs) for assessing the reach of the project by setting out targets for the project dissemination and communication efforts, such as presenting the project at 12 external conferences; the submission of six peer-reviewed articles, 10 policy briefs, six press releases, nine newsletters, 14 blogs, and one fact sheet; the creation of a brochure, two roll-ups, six webinars, the website and more, as well as PIs for monitoring the reach of the social media accounts.

The deliverable also details evaluation and monitoring mechanisms, including a Gantt chart and the monitoring spreadsheet, to streamline the organisation and reporting of activities. These two documents are key for ensuring alignments and continuous improvement.

ATHENA aims to optimise communication and dissemination efforts, foster meaningful engagement with stakeholders and maximise project impact. By developing innovative countermeasures tailored to thwart the evolving strategies of malicious actors and equipping stakeholders with the necessary tools to detect, mitigate and neutralise the threat posed by foreign information manipulation, ATHENA will contribute to Europe's resilience against FIMI.

Through proactive engagement, strategic collaboration and continuous evaluation, ATHENA endeavours to fortify Europe's digital sovereignty, safeguard democratic principles and uphold the integrity of information ecosystems across the continent and beyond.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym Abbreviation	Description
ATHENA	An exposition on The forEign informatioN mAnipulation and interference
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DEC	Dissemination, Exploitation, and Communication
ENISA	European Network and Information Security Agency
EOS	European Organisation for Security
FIMI	Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference

HfoeD	University of Applied Sciences for Public Administration and Legal Affairs in Bavaria
PI	Performance Indicators
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
TTP	Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures
TRI IE	Trilateral Research Ireland
UCD	University College Dublin

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Communication activities	Communication activities are geared towards promoting the project's activities and outcomes, a process initiated early in the project's lifecycle. These activities engage society as a whole through one-way or two-way exchanges, such as websites, press releases and social media channels. Generally, communication activities aim to inform society about the project's benefits.
Dissemination activities	Dissemination activities, on the other hand, focus on distributing project results after they become available or published. These activities primarily target potential users, including researchers, practitioners, or policymakers in related fields. Examples of dissemination activities may include scientific papers, academic conferences, or specialized conferences. Dissemination activities commence as soon as results and materials are ready and continue for up to 4 years after the project's conclusion.
Exploitation	Exploitation refers to the actual utilization of project results by partners within or outside the Consortium. It involves using the outcomes for research activities, product or service development, or other purposes, such as societal or commercial applications, or policymaking.
	Exploitation begins towards the end of the project and continues for up to 4 years after the project's end.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of ATHENA project and ATHENA goals

In a time when information manipulation and interference have turned the digital landscape into a battlefield, it is more important than ever to protect the integrity of democratic processes and societal norms. The stability and security of Europe are seriously threatened by the increase in highly skilled cyberattacks and misinformation campaigns coordinated by states outside the EU. In light of this, the European Union understands how critical it is to bolster its defences against these kinds of illicit operations.

Abbreviated from "An exposition on The forEign information mAnipulation and interference," the ATHENA project is addressing issues that arise from the foreign information manipulation and interference. Over a 36-month period, ATHENA is carefully analysing 32 FIMI case studies. Through an examination of the tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP) used by attackers, ATHENA aims to evaluate the significant societal ramifications of these attacks and potential countermeasures.

The ATHENA consortium brings together a wide range of expertise, including associations, factcheckers, academic institutions and cybersecurity companies. ATHENA is a cooperative initiative to strengthen Europe's resistance to FIMI, with allies from Sweden to Cyprus, and from Ukraine to Ireland.

The ATHENA research goes beyond analysis in order to create countermeasures designed to impede the ever-evolving tactics of hostile actors. Through the application of state-of-the-art technology and processes, ATHENA aims to provide stakeholders with the means by which they may identify and counteract the threat that FIMI poses.

ATHENA also examines legal and regulatory measures that strengthen Europe's defence against FIMI. The project will offer practical insights on areas where Member States and the EU can strengthen their policy framework to effectively address FIMI through an examination of current policies and their shortcomings.

ATHENA is engaging stakeholders throughout the project. Three of the consortium's partners are the coordinators of three disinformation projects funded under the EC's previous year's work programme. These are FERMI, HYB-NET and VIGILANT. The consortium created a large Stakeholder Board of more than 20 experts, who have been helpful in responding to our interviews and our discussion of current disinformation issues. Partners also interviewed third-party experts. All of the interviews have provided very good input to our deliverables starting with D1.1 and D1.2. ATHENA has also clustered with five other EU-funded projects and disinformation. ATHENA chaired the first three meeting of the cluster. ATHENA is dedicated to knowledge-sharing and capacity-building via webinars, workshops and training.

Europe needs all the help it can get to defend its democratic institutions, values and ideals in the face of relentless increases in disinformation campaigns and cyberattacks.

1.2 Context and relevance in the European setting

The ATHENA project directly addresses the urgent need to strengthen defences against FIMI. With more and more cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns targeting European democratic processes and social cohesiveness, ATHENA's all-encompassing strategy—which includes analysis, the creation of countermeasures, and stakeholder engagement—will contribute to the protection of Europe's digital sovereignty.

1.3 Explanation of the objectives of the communication and dissemination strategies

Our plans present a clear distinction and complementarity between communication, dissemination and exploitation in line with the glossary definitions of Horizon Europe¹:

- “Communication” means measures for promoting the action itself and its results to a multitude of audiences, including the media and the public, and possibly engaging in a two-way exchange. The communication activities must be planned and implemented from the outset (and continue throughout the entire action), with a comprehensive communication plan that defines clear objectives (adapted to various relevant target audiences) and sets out a concrete planning for the communication activities including a description and timing for each activity. In every Horizon Europe project proposal, a communication plan should be included to ensure that project results are widely communicated to the public, even outside the R&I community.
- “Dissemination” means the public disclosure of the results by appropriate means (other than resulting from protecting or exploiting the results), including by scientific publications in any medium; in every Horizon Europe work plan a dissemination plan should be included to ensure the sharing of the knowledge produced.
- “Exploitation” means the use of results in further research and innovation activities other than those covered by the action concerned, including inter alia, commercial exploitation such as developing, creating, manufacturing and marketing a product or process, creating and providing a service, or in standardisation activities. It is strongly advised to include such plans in a R&I proposal, especially when the project outputs have a good potential of entering the market.

This present deliverable, produced by M15 of the project, introduces our exploitation plan which will be updated in the final version of the document in M36.

The overarching dissemination, exploitation, and communication (DEC) strategy of the ATHENA project serves the dual purpose of informing stakeholders about project progress and outcomes while facilitating the use and encouragement of these results. Aligned with the project’s *Objective 5: Share knowledge about FIMI within and beyond the EU and measures for achieving interoperability*, the DEC strategy delineates specific objectives measured by KPIs aimed at achieving this overarching goal. This objective will be achieved by sharing findings, recommendations, and the comprehensive results and outcomes of the project with stakeholders, and by exploring avenues for interoperability and collaboration with ENISA, its network of ISACs, and other pertinent EU-funded projects.

These goals include activities focused on spreading knowledge and those aimed at fostering engagement. They encompass sharing methods and best practices, building resilience by exchanging information on countermeasures, launching campaigns to raise public awareness, and leveraging the results of the project to achieve the greatest possible impact.

1.4 Deliverable structure

This deliverable is split into 13 sections, each serving a specific function in outlining the project communication, dissemination and exploitation strategies. Section 1 is about the objectives of D5.1 (v. 2). Section 2 focuses on the project’s contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals. Section 3 provides a gender assessment. Section 4 focuses on updating the identification of stakeholder groups and needs, which is vital for fostering meaningful engagement. Following this, section 5 addresses the prioritisation of groups, refining the strategies to optimise outreach efforts. Section 6 revisits the key messages, ensuring their relevance over the project’s timeframe as the foundation of our communication strategy. Sections 7 and 8 remain dedicated to communication and dissemination methods and channels,

respectively, essential for reaching our target audience effectively. Section 9 provides guidance on dissemination and communication management, ensuring smooth execution. Section 10 evaluates dissemination and communication Performance Indicators (PIs) to measure the effectiveness of outreach activities and assess the impact of communication and dissemination efforts. Section 11 focuses on evaluation and monitoring, facilitating continuous improvement of project DEC activities. The newly added Section 12 presents the first version of the exploitation strategy, detailing how project outcomes will be leveraged to maximise their impact and ensure sustainability beyond the project's lifecycle. Finally, section 13 provides a conclusion summarising the insights gained from this deliverable. Through this systematic approach, the deliverable's aim is to optimise communication and dissemination efforts, fostering meaningful engagement and maximising project impact.

2. CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The dissemination, communication and exploitation plans contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goal of "Peace, justice and strong institutions" (SDG 16). They do so by advocating for strong institutional measures to contribute to countermeasures against FIMI. Case studies such as ours will contribute to justice by exposing the attackers' FIMI activities. If ATHENA activities help deter attackers from continuing their malign activities, it will have contributed to the "peace" part of the SDG too. ATHENA contributes to SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) to the extent that it recognises and advocates the need for collaboration and cooperation within and across national boundaries to combat FIMI, a point that it reiterates in various deliverables.

3. GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The goal of the ATHENA Gender Impact Assessment Checklist for deliverables is to guarantee that every facet of a project or research study is assessed with gender equality in mind.

Use of appropriate terminologies and language: Have we avoided reinforcing gender stereotypes in our deliverables through the use of offending language and terminologies?

Option 1: ☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ I'm not sure ☐ Not relevant

Reasoning: This item checks that publications, reports and other outputs don't contain any language that can be interpreted as endorsing biases or traditional gender norms.

Gender issues in research objectives and questions

Have we thought about the potential effects on various genders when developing our study topic and outlining our goals?

Option 1: ☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ I'm not sure ☐ Not relevant

Justification: This guarantees that the research methodology is intentionally developed to tackle or emphasise gender disparities or concerns, which could result in more comprehensive and representative outcomes.

Using data disaggregated by gender

Have we tried to gather and use data that is broken down by gender when it is relevant?

Option 1: YES ☒ NO ☐ I'm not sure ☐ Not relevant

Justification: Gender-specific data collection enables a more in-depth examination of the ways in which the research topic affects various genders, which might be essential for creating just policies and solutions. Nevertheless, gender only played a significant role only in one of our 32 case studies. However, the partners all believe it is important to be alert to gender issues outside of ATHENA.

Gender consideration in research gaps

Did we take into account the potential impact of gender on the gaps we found in the research or data?

The only significant exercise of gender data was just in the so-called Lisa case.

When identifying gaps in the research or data, did we consider how gender might influence these gaps?

Option 1: YES ☒ NO ☐ I'm not sure ☐ Not relevant ☐

Justification: In order to ensure a more complete and nuanced understanding of the research context, this compels the research team to consider if gender dynamics could be a contributing factor to the existence or character of these gaps.

Gender-Specific hazards and their reduction

Have there been any gender-specific dangers found in our research? If yes, what relevant mitigation strategies have we planned?

Options: ☐ I don't know ☐ NO ☒ YES ☐ Not relevant ☐

Explanation: This ensures that the project considers and addresses potential risks that might disproportionately affect individuals based on their gender, aiming to protect all participants and stakeholders.

Other considerations on sex and gender dimension

Question: Are there other important considerations regarding the sex and gender dimensions that should be acknowledged in this report?

Choices: ☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ I don't know ☐ Not applicable

Explanation: This is an open-ended item allowing for the identification and discussion of other genderrelated issues or considerations that might not have been explicitly covered in the standard checklist items. Although the partners found gender played a role in only one of its 32 case studies, still, the consortium believes that it is desirable for the EC to fund research in the role that gender plays in FIMI, both in the roles of attacker and victims, who could be individuals, groups or society as a whole.

Source: <https://wereset.eu/gia-checklist-for-research-proposals/>

4. IDENTIFICATION OF STAKEHOLDER GROUPS AND NEEDS

The ATHENA consortium recognizes that effectively addressing FIMI requires an understanding of various stakeholder groups involved in facing these challenges. Each group has been pre-identified in the initial Dissemination and Communication Plan submitted at M6. This section establishes the effectiveness of the groups in contributing to the project's goals and highlights areas where adjustments may be required. From March 2024, ATHENA has identified 48 stakeholders, with whom 3 meetings in Y1 were conducted to discuss and consult on matters.

4.1 Public organisations and bodies

These entities, which include government agencies, local authorities, and public institutions, play a key role in protecting the integrity of information and ensuring public trust in governmental processes. Their involvement has been crucial in maintaining public communication infrastructure. However, challenges persist in ensuring consistent participation across local levels. Tailored engagement may increase their effectiveness.

4.2 Cybersecurity and fact-checking bodies

This group comprises organizations and entities specializing in identifying, analysing, and countering cyber threats and misinformation. They require advanced tools, methodologies, and collaborative platforms to effectively detect and mitigate FIMI activities.

4.3 Politicians

Politicians require standards on responsible communication to prevent the unintentional dissemination of altered information, as well as methods and tools to defend themselves against disinformation campaigns. As public figures, politicians are both targets and disseminators of information.

4.4 Civil society organisations

These are non-governmental, nonprofit organisations that serve the public interest. They are essential in spreading knowledge, enlightening the public, and galvanising the populace against FIMI.

4.5 Small and medium enterprises

SMEs may lack the resources of larger corporations to counter FIMI. They require practical, accessible tools and knowledge to protect their businesses from misinformation and cyber threats, ensuring the trustworthiness of their communications.

4.6 Scientific and research community

Researchers and academics studying FIMI need access to data, case studies, and analysis tools. Their work in understanding and developing countermeasures against information manipulation relies on collaboration with other stakeholders and access to the latest findings and technologies.

4.7 Educational institutions and students

Schools, universities, and their students are both targets and mitigators of FIMI. They need educational materials, programs, and training to understand and identify misinformation, fostering critical thinking and digital literacy.

4.8 Policymakers and security practitioners

This group includes individuals and bodies responsible for creating policies and strategies to counter FIMI. They require comprehensive analyses of legal, social, and technical aspects of FIMI to inform effective legislation and security practices.

4.9 Technology and security solutions providers

Companies and organizations that develop technology and security solutions are key in creating the tools needed to fight FIMI. Their needs include insights into the latest tactics used by adversaries and opportunities for collaboration to refine and advance their technologies.

4.10 Related projects and collaborative initiatives

Initiatives and projects with similar goals or overlapping interests in countering FIMI can provide valuable partnerships, sharing knowledge, resources, and strategies to enhance the effectiveness of all involved.

4.11 Media and journalists

As leaders in the fight against disinformation, journalists and other media workers are essential to the dissemination of knowledge. This necessitates that they have strong abilities to recognise and appropriately report on material that is erroneous or deceptive. Their knowledge is essential to preserving the integrity of public discourse and strengthening society's resistance to false information by ensuring that the public is provided with reliable and accurate information.

4.12 General public

As media consumers, the general population needs to be given the knowledge and skills needed to evaluate the content they come across on a regular basis. This entails developing media literacy abilities so people can tell the difference between biased or misleading information and reliable news. By developing these skills, viewers are better equipped to make educated choices and interact with media more carefully. By strengthening the foundation of informed citizenship and improving individual judgement, this makes society more equipped to deal with the challenges of the information era.

5. PRIORITISATION OF GROUPS FOR EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

The ATHENA project strategically tailors its engagement with diverse stakeholder groups, prioritizing based on their unique potential to counteract FIMI. To ensure a targeted approach, the project delineates specific visions for each group:

- **Cybersecurity and fact-checking bodies:** These organizations are crucial for their frontline role in combating FIMI. They are specifically targeted for initiatives that bolster early detection and mitigation efforts.
- **Media professionals and journalists:** Given their critical role in information dissemination, this group will be provided with specialized training and tools to identify and debunk misinformation, thus protecting media integrity and promoting an informed public.
- **Educational institutions and students:** Recognized as foundational for cultivating critical thinking and digital literacy, this group is the primary recipient of the project's educational materials and initiatives, distinct from training provided by cybersecurity professionals.
- **Public organisations and bodies:** As custodians of public trust, these entities are engaged primarily for the adoption of policies that safeguard democratic processes and public discourse from the impacts of FIMI.
- **Policymakers and security practitioners:** This group is crucial for the development of legal and regulatory frameworks that combat FIMI and is specifically involved in policy-making and strategic defence planning.
- **Civil society organizations (CSOs):** These groups are targeted for their capability to raise public awareness and foster grassroots resilience against misinformation.

- **Scientific and research community:** Their involvement is prioritized for advancing research into FIMI and developing innovative countermeasures.
- **Technology and security solutions providers:** Collaboration with this sector is essential for developing advanced technological solutions to detect and neutralize FIMI.
- **Politicians:** Engaged both to protect them from being targets and to prevent them from inadvertently spreading misinformation.
- **Small and medium enterprises (SMEs):** SMEs are supported with defensive strategies against FIMI, recognizing their role in the economic fabric.
- **Related projects and collaborative initiatives:** Partnering with related efforts is prioritized to leverage synergies and enhance collective efficacy against FIMI.

6. KEY MESSAGES

6.1 General principles

The guiding concepts of ATHENA are innovation, integrity and teamwork. The project's procedures and relationships with its stakeholders are guided by these concepts.

- **Collaboration:** In order to address the difficulties of FIMI, ATHENA unites a wide range of stakeholders, emphasising the value of teamwork. This principle emphasises how important it is to have a coordinated approach in order to effectively address FIMI. This approach is best demonstrated by certain collaboration organisations like the External Advisory Board (EAB), the FIMI cluster, and the Stakeholder Board (SB). Through the integration of varied viewpoints and levels of expertise made possible by these platforms, ATHENA cultivates a knowledge and resource sharing environment with the goal of producing a synergistic effect that increases the overall efficacy of its projects.
- **Integrity:** Maintaining truth and trust in the digital era is essential to ATHENA's mission. By guaranteeing that important stakeholders have access to accurate and trustworthy information, the initiative is dedicated to strengthening societies' resistance to disinformation. This dedication to integrity entails creating instruments and tactics that preserve information authenticity.
- **Innovation:** The consortium places a high priority on innovation since it recognises the always changing strategies used by disinformation. The project aims to maintain keen oversight over the constantly evolving FIMI attacks and deterrent measures.

6.2 High-level messages for broad communication

- **Empowering Europe against disinformation:** This message encapsulates ATHENA's main objectives to strengthen the European Union's defences against the torrent of FIMI. It speaks to the project's commitment to offering stakeholders the tools, and collaborative platform necessary to identify, understand, and counteract FIMI.
- **Building a resilient digital future together:** This high-level message highlights the importance of collective action in securing the digital information landscape. It underscores the approach of working hand in hand with various stakeholders to build a future where digital platforms and communications are safeguarded against misinformation. The focus is on resilience, suggesting that through cooperation and shared effort, Europe can withstand and bounce back from the challenges posed by FIMI.

- **Innovation at the forefront of digital safety:** Reflecting ATHENA's principle of innovation, this message underlines the project's role in pioneering new technologies and methodologies to combat misinformation. It conveys the idea that through innovative research and development, the project is leading the charge in creating a safer digital environment.

These key messages serve as the foundation for the communication strategy, designed to reach a broad audience while articulating the project's core values and objectives. Through these messages, the partners aim to inspire engagement and foster collaboration.

6.3 Tailored messages per objective and stakeholder group

- **Cybersecurity and fact-checking bodies:** : Emphasising the critical role these organisations play in the frontline defence against misinformation and cyber threats. These messages will be used in outreach campaigns, and collaborative workshops.
- **Media and journalists:** " Underlining the power of critical thinking and informed judgment in protecting public discourse and democratic values. This message will guide content for media literacy programs.
- **Public organizations and bodies:** Highlighting their role in maintaining the integrity of information and the importance of secure and trustworthy public communications. This message will be incorporated into policy briefings, public communications strategies.
- **Policymakers and security practitioners:** Focusing on the impact of informed, proactive policymaking and security practices in countering FIMI. This theme will shape the development of policy guidelines, security protocols, and strategic planning sessions.
- **Educational institutions and students:** Emphasizing the value of education in fostering critical thinking and digital literacy as essential abilities in the digital age for both educational institutions and students. This message will guide the creation of curricula, instructional workshops, and outreach programmes for students.
- **Civil society organisations (CSOs):** " Highlighting the importance of civil society in educating the public and creating awareness in the fight against misinformation. This will be applied to community initiatives, advocacy campaigns, and joint venture endeavours.
- **Scientific and research community:** Highlighting the importance of research and innovation in developing effective countermeasures against FIMI. This message will be central to grant proposals, research publications, and collaborative research projects.
- **Technology and security solutions providers:** Acknowledging the critical role of innovative technologies in detecting and countering digital threats and misinformation. This will feature in industry conferences, product development meetings, and technology showcases.
- **Politicians:** Offering guidance on protecting against misinformation while maintaining responsible and trustworthy communication. This message will be tailored for political training programs, ethical guidelines, and public speaking events.
- **Small and medium enterprises (SMEs):** Providing tools and knowledge to protect SMEs from the impact of FIMI on business operations and trust. This will be used in SME workshops, business resilience resources, and trade association communications.
- **Related projects and collaborative initiatives:** Encouraging partnerships and sharing of knowledge and resources to enhance the collective capability to counter FIMI. This message will be promoted through networking events, joint projects, and multi-stakeholder forums.

7. DISSEMINATION METHODS AND CHANNELS

Dissemination methods and channels focus on communicating results of the project among the stakeholder groups identified in Section 4. The goal is to raise interest and engage potential end-users and customers, as well as strategic partners, and ensure the project's success.

7.1 Scientific channels and publications

ATHENA dedicates itself to present its results among the scientific and research community. The plan includes publications in peer reviewed journals (6 in total), book chapters, and scientific articles in newspapers and magazines (more than 10). ATHENA encourages the production of joint-partners publications, as well as publications with sister EU-funded projects. In the current stage of the project, ATHENA is considering the publication in the book chapter of Springer publisher.

WP5 leader, the European Organisation for Security (EOS), together with the partners, are looking for publication opportunities in conferences and journals, and are regularly sharing with partners through the collaborative spreadsheet EOS put in place. Partners are expected to report any publication to the WP5 leader in the monitoring spreadsheet. The scientific publications must be easily accessible and the publishing partners must provide access details to verify the publication. Through these concerted efforts, ATHENA aims to disseminate its research findings widely within the scientific community, fostering collaboration and contributing to knowledge advancement in the field of disinformation and democratic governance.

7.2 Project events/workshops/webinars

ATHENA aims to hold internal events like kick-offs, in-person consortium meetings, and workshops during the project lifecycle. ATHENA will discuss the organization of the joint workshops with partners in the upcoming months. EOS as the WP5 leader, together with task leaders such as EU-Disinfo Lab, the University of Applied Sciences for Public Administration and Legal Affairs in Bavaria (HfoeD), Trilateral (TRI IE) and LAUREA University, will be responsible for the organization of such workshops.

Below there is a list of conducted and planned events:

- ATHENA Kick-off meeting (held in Brussels on 12 January 2024)
- ATHENA face-to-face meeting (held in Barcelona on 12-13 September 2024)

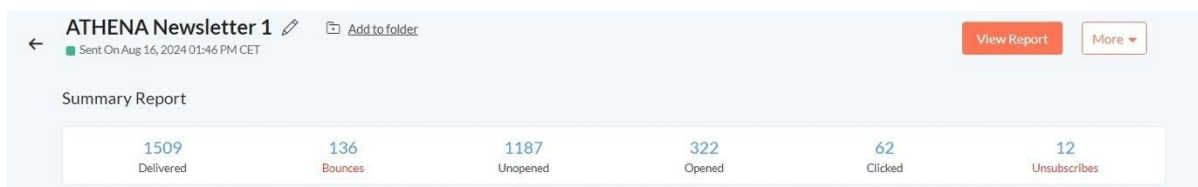
The EU-Disinfo Lab, Leader of Task 5.2, is planning to organize a webinar on the ATHENA project in April 2025.

7.3 Newsletter

A project newsletter will be published online and shared with targeted stakeholder groups three times per year (9 in total). The newsletter will include updates on the progress made in the project, the preliminary results per research subject and any completed or upcoming dissemination activities (articles, workshops, presentations etc).

The first project newsletter has been issued on M8. It has been delivered to 1509 contacts and has been opened 322 times with 12 unsubscribing.

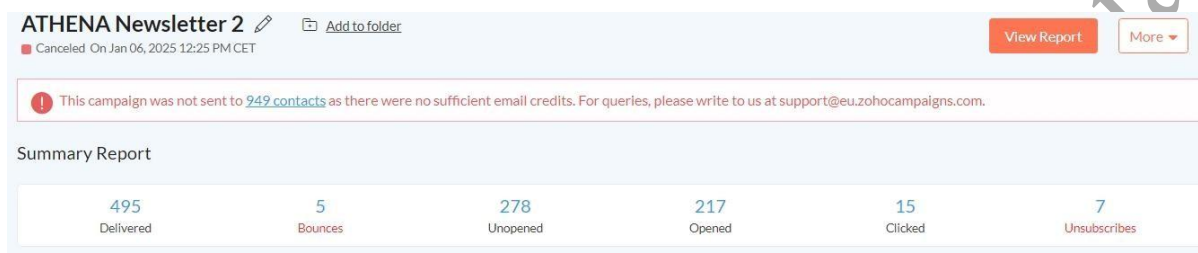
FIGURE 1: ATHENA NEWSLETTER 1 STATS



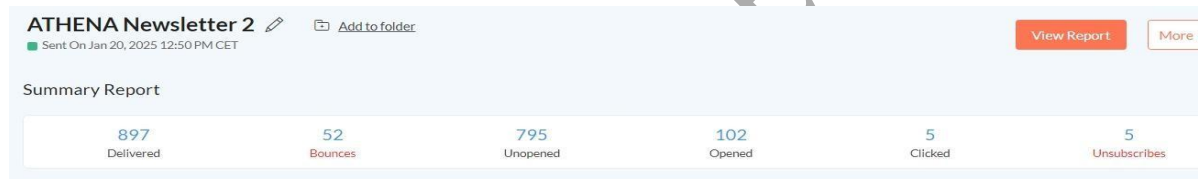
The second newsletter has been sent in M15 in two parts as there was an issue with the free email credits which are available under the free Zoho account plan. Hence, to solve the issue, EOS had to purchase extra credits to be able to send the newsletter, this caused the delay.

The first part has been delivered to 495 contacts, opened 278 times and received 7 unsubscribing.

FIGURE 2: ATHENA NEWSLETTER 2 STATS



The second part has been sent in M15. Delivered to 897 contacts, 52 of which bounced back. 102 were opened and 5 recipients unsubscribed.



The third newsletter is planned to be sent in M17, the fourth in M20, the fifth in M23, the sixth in M26, the seventh in M29, the eighth in M31 and the ninth in M35.

To overcome the challenges of bounced email, EOS will review and edit the contact list, to make sure that updated emails are on the list. To address the issue of unopened emails we will try to increase our social media engagement, to gain stronger cooperation with followers who can potentially subscribe to the newsletter.

The newsletter has been created and distributed through the Zoho mailing platform. The subscription to the newsletter has been integrated into the ATHENA website. The subscribers can easily unsubscribe, if necessary. The data collected, such as name, email, organization and position are stored on the Zoho Account during the project lifecycle.

7.4 Podcasts

The project aims to record 3 podcasts during the project duration. By incorporating podcasts into its communication strategy, ATHENA can leverage this popular and accessible medium to reach a wider audience beyond traditional written formats. The podcasts will be around 10 minutes long and published on the website as well as on social media (YouTube, Spotify with posts on LinkedIn and X). The topic of the podcast will be selected by the WP5 lead EOS and the T5.4 lead.

The first podcast has been recorded in M14 by the T5.4 leader CEPOLIS (HfoeD). The podcast took place on December 16th through the Microsoft Teams platform with its first guest, the Executive Director of EU-Disinfo Lab, Alexandre Alaphilippe. The WP5 lead, EOS, will edit the podcast. It is scheduled to be published on the website and ATHENA's social media channels by mid-M16.

The second podcast is expected to be recorded in M25.

The third and final podcast is planned for Y3 of the project.

7.5 Videos

ATHENA aims to conduct 1 project video per year (3 in total) as a means of interactive dissemination. The videos, each lasting 3–4 minutes, will focus on the project overview, interim results, and final conference outcomes. The first video is planned for release in M20 and will be shared on the website and the project's YouTube channel to enhance dissemination activities.

WP5 lead, EOS, created a teaser video for the project and published it on the YouTube channel with the following [link](#).

7.6 Conferences and events

ATHENA aims to organise the final conference, with at least 100 participants from all stakeholder groups, by the end of the project. The conference leader EU-DisinfoLab, together with the WP5 leader, EOS, will be responsible for the organizational aspects of the conference. Furthermore, the project aims to participate in more than 12 conferences related to the project objectives during the ATHENA lifecycle.

ATHENA plans to attend related events by its partners, as well as identified stakeholders, with the purpose of disseminating its results. At these events, ATHENA will aim to disseminate printed material, participate in joint panels and hold stands at events that offer this possibility.

On the day of submitting this deliverable, ATHENA has attended and participated in 2 events and 5 conferences.

Events:

- 31 October – 1 November 2023: A collaboration with the Applied AI department of Gothenburg University where students developed small workable prototypes connected to WP4. Partner: RISE
- 21 May 2024: Conference on Research and Innovation in Defence, Ministry of Defence, Republic of Cyprus. Objective: ATHENA FIMI Campaigns: Threats, Analysis and Mitigation. Partner:UCY.
- 31 January 2025 (upcoming): (Marie-Sklodowska Curie Action) MSCA lunchtime conversation - Digital democracy and citizenship – what skills in the era of fake news and disinformation, online. Partner:TRI

Conferences:

- 22-24 November 2023: 6th CF SEDSS III Conference, 2nd ETS & exhibition. Presentation of ATHENA. Partner: FORTH
- 12-14 December 2023: Symposium on Whole-of-Society Counter Disinformation. Organized by the Marshall Center (US DoD/DE DoD0), the Cypriot Ministry of Defence and the Diplomatic Academy of Nicosia. Presentation of ATHENA. Partner: UCY
- 13-14 June 2024: 6th Summit on Gender Equality in Computing. Poster presentation of ATHENA. Partner: UCY
- 24-25 July 2024: Regional Cyber Resilience: Lviv Forum. Presentation of ATHENA. Partner:ISSP

- 9-10 October 2024: EU-D Annual Conference in Riga. ATHENA had a stand with dissemination materials. Partner: HfoeD, EOS, EU-Disinfo Lab

Several conferences and events are scheduled for 2025, offering opportunities for our partners to attend and present ATHENA results. Details will be included in the updated D5.1 v3, to be released in M36.

In order to better monitor the upcoming events/conferences and partners' participation in events where ATHENA can be present, EOS had developed the Events Spreadsheet.

FIGURE 3: ATHENA EVENTS SHEET

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Event Name	Event Type (e.g. conference/workshop)	Event description	Event Date	Event location	Website	Indication of interest (partner)	Registered (partner)	Attended (partner)
1									
2	Disinfo 2024	Conference	Bringing the counter-disinformation community together to exchange, learn and network	9-10 October 2024	Riga, Latvia	https://www.disinfo.eu/conference-2024/			
3	17th International Conference on ICT, Society and Human Beings	Conference	Topic on ICT and democracy	13 – 15 July 2024	Budapest, Hungary	https://www.ict-conf.org/			
4	EU-D webinar	Webinar	Webinar on ATHENA with the University of Cyprus	17-Apr-25	Online	https://www.disinfo.eu/outreach/our-webinars/			
5	Cambridge Disinformat Conference		The 2025 Cambridge Disinformation Summit is designed to convene global thought leaders to discuss research regarding the efficacy of potential interventions to mitigate the harms from disinformation.	23 - 25 April 2025	Cambridge, UK	https://www.its.cam.ac.uk/events/cambridge-disinformation-summit-2025/			
6	Disinformation, Media Conference		Explore how disinformation narratives are influencing public perception and the European electoral process. Attendees will be able to delve deeper into strategies to combat misinformation and learn about the current regulatory framework.	27-May	Madrid, Spain	https://maldita.es/nosotros/2024/05/14/malditas-jornada-desinformacion-medios-futuro-ue/			
7	Disinfo2025	Conference	Bringing the counter-disinformation community together to exchange, learn and network	15-16 October 2025	Ljubljana, Slovenia	https://www.disinfo.eu/conference/			
8									
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17									

7.7 Citizen assembly

WP2 is dedicated to conducting interviews to evaluate the impact of FIMI countermeasures on the beliefs and understandings of citizens participating in citizens assemblies. The objective of WP2 is to gather insights into how FIMI countermeasures have influenced the perspectives of citizens.

To achieve this goal, project partners will systematically gather and analyse data from various sources, including repositories and interviews with key stakeholders such as DISARM partners and MITRE officials. Leveraging their extensive experience in organizing citizen assemblies through the ADAPT Centre, our partners Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and University College Dublin (UCD) are organising the citizen assemblies, with the first planned for February 2025.

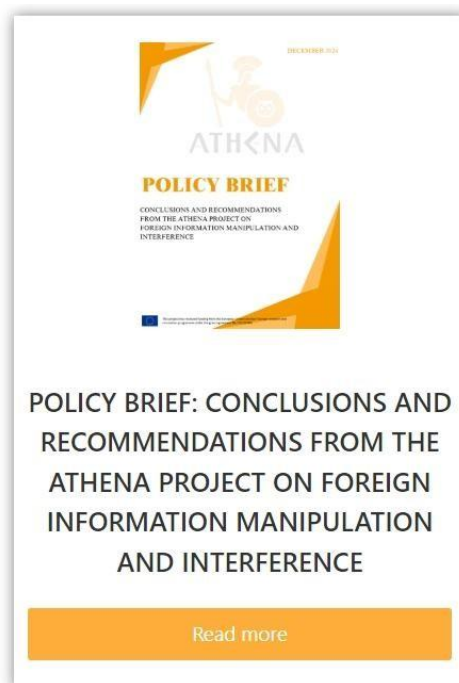
TCD and UCD will engage with 50 citizens in each of the citizen assemblies, using their established methodologies for conducting such forums. These assemblies will serve as platforms for understanding how serious citizens regard disinformation and which countermeasures they think appropriate.

7.8 Policy briefs

To disseminate techniques and best practices and organise dialogue with policymakers and other targeted stakeholders, the project plans to develop and disseminate 10 policy briefs to policymakers and legislators in all Member States. The policy briefs are typically four to six pages long (although the executive summary of D1.1 was somewhat longer – 10 pages). The policy briefs are generally based on the key findings and recommendations from the deliverables. The policy briefs are being emailed to policymakers and politicians.

The first policy brief was issued in M14 based on the Conclusions and Recommendations from the ATHENA D1.1 deliverable. This policy brief was disseminated to all stakeholders on the project's contact list and has been published on the ATHENA website

FIGURE 4: ATHENA POLICY BRIEF



Policy briefs serve as indispensable vehicles for translating research into actionable policies, thereby contributing to the advancement of democratic governance and the realization of project objectives.

7.9 Training

The project aims to provide training in countermeasures for the defined stakeholders starting from M18.

This effort underscores the importance of education and preparedness in addressing contemporary challenges, emphasizing the utilization of ATHENA project results to mitigate potential risks and promote democratic values. Such training not only enhances individual and institutional capabilities but also contributes to project management objectives by facilitating knowledge dissemination and exploitation.

LAUREA University, as the task leader, will develop training programs and materials to be made available online. These resources will be accessible to all Member States and are intended for use in secondary school education departments. Training will also be organized on-site in Finland, Ireland, Cyprus, Germany. This training will be accompanied by PowerPoint slides and a 20-page briefing paper.

Additionally, lectures on the project deliverables will be organized in specific university departments. More details on the training will be provided in the final deliverable in M36.

7.10 Networking activities

ATHENA aims to create networking activities with its sister projects in tackling information manipulation and disinformation. The project aims to create a cluster with 8 projects and to hold at least 9 cluster meetings during the project lifecycle.

In M5, ATHENA organized an online meeting for the creation of the FIMI cluster with sister EUfunded projects such as:

- SAUFEX
- ADAC.io
- ARM
- DE-CONSPIRATOR
- RESONANT

The EC Project Office and Policy Officer have attended the meetings as well. Coordinators have presented their projects at the meetings. We've discussed how to leverage the impact of the projects and reaching out to other projects also addressing the challenges of disinformation.

The discussions have centred around enhancing mutual dissemination and communication activities within the ATHENA project, and emphasizing collaborative efforts such as mutual promotion, social media engagement, cluster brochure and the organization of webinars.

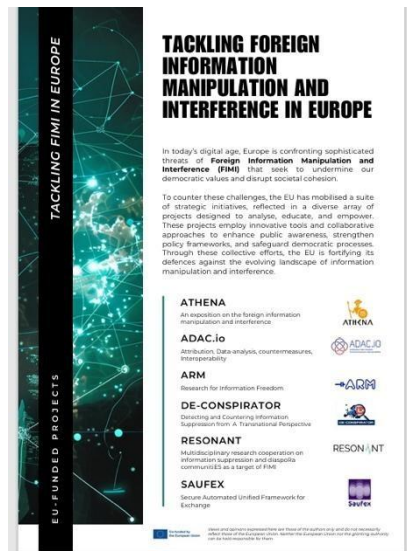
The following meetings have been held:

- 22nd March 2024 Initial Cluster Meeting
- 3rd July 2024 Cluster Meeting
- 10th October 2024 Cluster Meeting during the EU-Disinfo Lab Annual Conference in Riga
- 6th November 2024 Cluster Meeting: Provide a report on the Cluster activities.

Additionally, ATHENA partners from the HfoeD held a presentation of the project on March 4th 2024 at a webinar of the sister project FERMI, which initiated networking between the two projects.

In M8, the first cluster brochure was issued by EU-Disinfo Lab and published on the ATHENA website.

FIGURE 5: ATHENA CLUSTER BROCHURE



These initiatives serve as effective channels for sharing project updates, research findings, and best practices with a broader audience. Additionally, there is a concerted effort to expand ATHENA's cluster and network by fostering partnerships and collaborations with relevant stakeholders. This expansion includes collaborating with related projects, enabling us to leverage networks beyond our own and significantly increase our reach to a larger audience of interested stakeholders. ATHENA enhances the project's impact by promoting involvement in collaborative events as speakers and attendees, thereby facilitating information exchange. ATHENA seeks to foster a dynamic and linked network of stakeholders dedicated to strengthening democratic government and tackling modern issues by utilising various platforms for interaction and collaboration.

8. COMMUNICATION METHODS AND CHANNELS

8.1 Project branding guidance

The identity of ATHENA is expressed through the ATHENA logo and colours, shown in Figure 6, which are included in all communication channels and materials. It is important, however, to note that when the ATHENA logo is used, similar significance must be given to the EU logo. Furthermore, the following sentence “Funded by the European Union (grant number 101132686). UK participants in Horizon Europe Project ATHENA are supported by UKRI grant number 10107667 (Trilateral Research). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency (REA) or UKRI. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority nor UKRI can be held responsible for them. Grant Agreement 101132686 ATHENA HORIZON-CL2-2023-DEMOCRACY-01” must always be included when using both logos – in line with the Grant Agreement.

FIGURE 6: ATHENA LOGO

The logo is inspired by the name of the project: ATHENA and thus, contains the figure of a Greek Phalanx soldier holding a spear and shield with the face of an owl, one of the symbols of Athena the Greek Goddess of wisdom and military victory. The owl is considered Athena's sacred animal, the source of her wisdom and judgment. The owl has exceptional night vision, symbolizing Athena's ability to "see" when others cannot, just as the project aims to see foreign misinformation and provide the tools to combat it.

With the logo as a starting point, the branding guidelines were created by TRI. Their aim is to offer the ATHENA partners some guidelines on how to use the logo, its basic elements, the correct colour palette, fonts and sizes. These instructions will help partners to produce communication materials which correctly represent the ATHENA identity. The branding guidelines have been shared with the partners through email and SharePoint.

Moreover, templates for internal communication have been created:

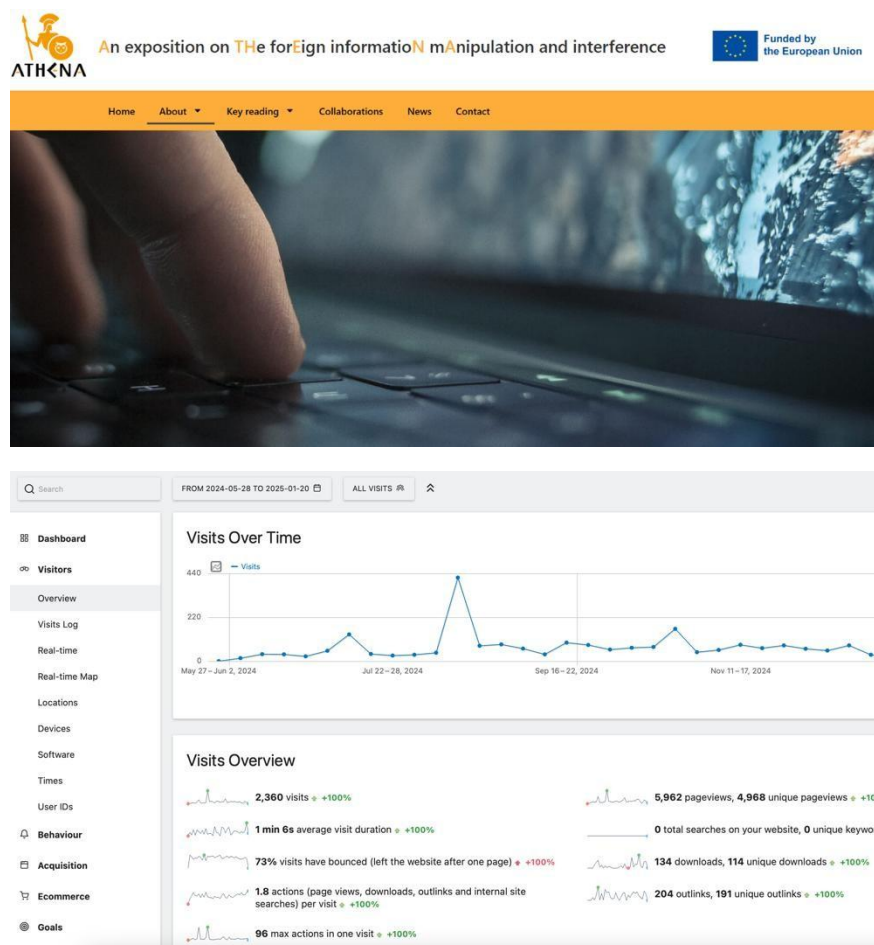
- Deliverable template, used by the Consortium partners for coherency in documents submitted to the EU;
- PPT template, used by the consortium partners in presentations in internal, as well as external meetings. The template includes generic slides and useful visual materials;
- Newsletter template;
- Press release template; • Policy brief template.

8.2 Project website

The primary goal of the ATHENA website is to cultivate awareness and engagement by effectively communicating the project's objectives, progress, findings, and resources. It serves as a centralized hub for accessing ATHENA's tools, publications, news, and project outputs, including comprehensive descriptions of methodologies and objectives, case studies, and event information. The website became operational by M4 of the project and is accessible at <https://project-athena.eu/>. It features detailed information about the project, its partners, the ATHENA Boards, the clusters it is involved with, contact details, public deliverables, blogs, and a newsletter sign up link.

The website also features a seamless integration of social media (X, LinkedIn, YouTube), displaying the posts made by the ATHENA account.

FIGURE 7: ATHENA WEBSITE & DATA



Since M7, the ATHENA website has recorded 2,360 visits, with an average visit duration of 1 minute and 6 seconds during the project's first year (Y1).

8.3 Social media channels

The primary aim of ATHENA's social media channels is to raise awareness and generate interest in ATHENA topics, enhancing visibility of news and partner-organized events. These platforms serve to foster connections with diverse communities and stakeholders, facilitating the sharing of project results, external posts related to ATHENA issues, and surveys. Additionally, they engage the community through comments and feedback, interact with other relevant pages and groups, and amplify the visibility of news published on the website. By creating a first-level community, these channels also contribute to showcasing scientific publications and enhancing their visibility.

EOS, WP5 lead, is using the monthly WP5 meetings to discuss the social media strategy with the ATHENA partners in order to share news and activities by requesting the contributions from partners to the Monitoring spreadsheet. Specific deadlines, modes of interaction with the WP5 leader and expected actions to carry out in specific phases of the project have been shared with partners, in order to ensure that the implementation of the social media plan is effectively realised.

Stakeholders and Consortium partners have been asked to actively participate on the social media activities. Their involvement is essential to increase the visibility of the project.

8.3.1 LinkedIn

An important professional channel is LinkedIn. The [ATHENA LinkedIn page](#) created in M3, aims to promote the project's activities in professional networks, involving policymakers, practitioners and industry representatives. As one of the main professional networks, LinkedIn is expected to constitute the most relevant social media platform for communication and dissemination purposes. It is used to

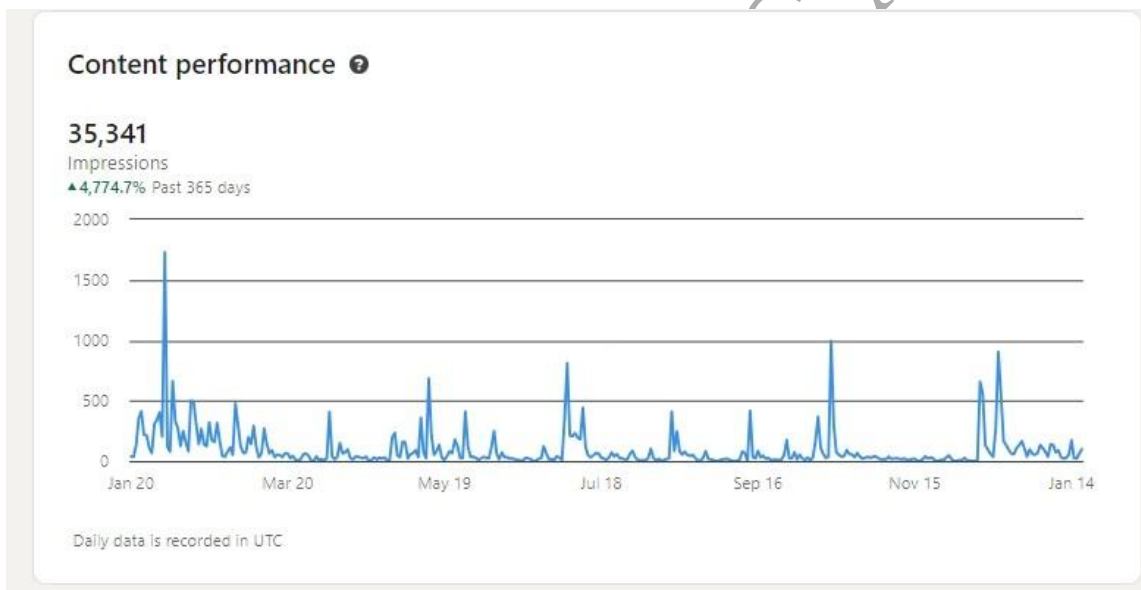
raise awareness about the project's main achievements, activities and results, as well as to target experts and professionals in disaster management, and collect their feedback on targeted questions.

On the date of submitting the D5.1-v2, ATHENA LinkedIn account has 449 followers, 54 posts and 35,341 impressions since M3.

FIGURE 8: ATHENA LINKEDIN IN M15

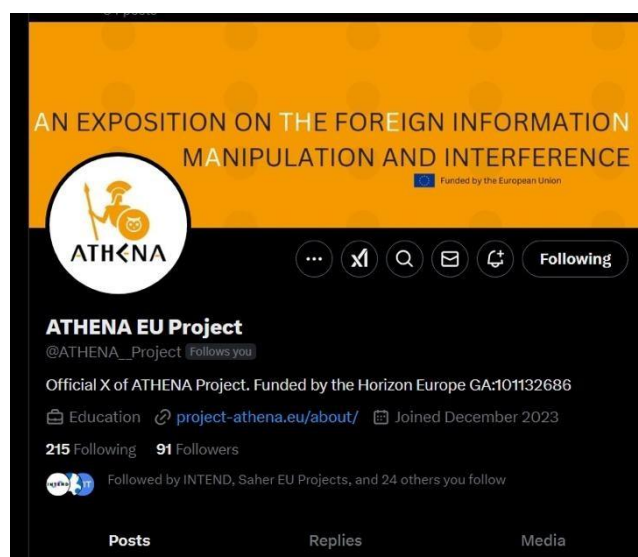


FIGURE 9: ATHENA ANALYTICS LINKEDIN



8.3.2 X

The ATHENA account ([@ATHENA_Project](#)) on the X (previously Twitter) platform was launched in M3. It not only raises awareness for the project, but seeks to engage relevant experts in critical ontopic discussions. Moreover, it aims to attract followers interested in the project's results, thereby contributing to the project's exploitation objectives. The X account will be intensively used during events, conferences, in order to provide live updates. In order to reach a wider audience and ensure the highest visibility, it is crucial that partners contribute to producing original content, and join in existing conversations, as highlighted during the monthly WP5 meeting. In M15, the X account has 91 followers and 33 posts.

FIGURE 10: ATHENA X IN M15

8.3.3 YouTube

The YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/@ATHENA_EU) was launched in M3. The channel will host the official videos and podcasts produced by the project. In M15, the YouTube channel has 16 subscribers and 65 views on the first video.

FIGURE 11: ATHENA YouTube IN M15

8.4 Promotional materials

The project will produce two roll-ups. ATHENA produced the first roll-up in the early April, whilst the second will be more specialised and will be created at later date based on need.

The project has also produced a brochure outlining the project, the core issues it will tackle, the consortium partners, and links to project's social media and website.

The project also intends to produce 2 factsheets, the 1st factsheet has been issued in M6. It is planned to be translated into partner languages in the following months.

FIGURE 12: ATHENA GENERAL FACTSHEET

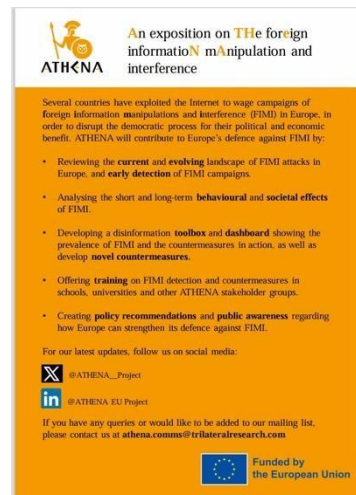


FIGURE 13: ATHENA BROCHURE



FIGURE 14: ATHENA ROLL-UP



8.5 Press releases

The press release will inform the general public about key moments of the project (e.g. an important meeting or conference, achieving a key result, conducting an event). The project Partners will compile a contact list of about 10 journalists in each Member State who have written about disinformation, deepfakes or fake news who will be emailed the 6 press releases. In M15 the T5.4 lead, HfoeD, is progressing with the compilation of this list of journalists. 3 press releases have been issued, 1 of which issued in M14 was translated into 6 partner languages, while 1 translation to Finnish is under progress and planned to be issued in mid-M16 and the press release in Swedish has to be published on the website in the beginning of M16.

FIGURE 15: ATHENA PRESS RELEASES



The ATHENA project plans to publish 13 or more blogs, at least one from each partner, on its website and social media accounts. Partners will prepare blogs about their involvement in ATHENA related activities.

On the day of the submission of this report, ATHENA has published seven blogposts on its [website](#) and social media.

Please see Table 1 displaying the blog post schedule below

TABLE 1: BLOG POST SCHEDULE

N.	Date	Partner in charge	Subjects
1	Mar-24	TRI	Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty
2	Apr-24	TRI	Maintaining election integrity: EC's big tech measures 'Very large online platforms (VLOPs)' and 'very large online search engines (VLOSEs)'
3	May-24	TRI	Combating foreign interference in elections
4	Jun-24	TRI	China blurs the lines between disinformation and cyberattacks in the 2024 Taiwanese elections
5	Jul-24	EOS	Using false information to manipulate the masses – the evolving concept of disinformation
6	Aug-24	ISSP	FIMI is a promising concept for counteracting Russian "sharp power"
7	Oct-24	EU-D	Decoding FIMI: a complex interrelation with disinformation

	2025		
8	Apr-25	HfoeD	
9	May-25	LAU	
10	Sep-25	RISE	
11	Oct-25	MAL	
12	Nov-25	EUT	
	2026		
13	Mar-26	Storyzy	Concluding the project
14	May-26	TCD	
15	Sep-26	TRI/EOS	

8.7 Webinars

The project will present its findings in 12 webinars open to all stakeholders. The webinars will be organized during the lifecycle of the project, starting closer to the end of the first year of ATHENA. The webinars will be focused on ATHENA's objectives and goals in defining and targeting FIMI and disinformation. The project plans to have 1-2 speakers during the webinar with the moderator. The first webinar is planned on April 17th 2025 by EU-Disinfo Lab.

Adopting a cross-channel approach, ATHENA ensures seamless integration between its general communication platforms (website, blog posts, and webinars) and social media channels (Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube or alternative channels which suit this activity like Spotify). This interconnectedness ensures consistent dissemination of content across various platforms, with channels linking back to one another. Key cross-channel activities encompass the following:

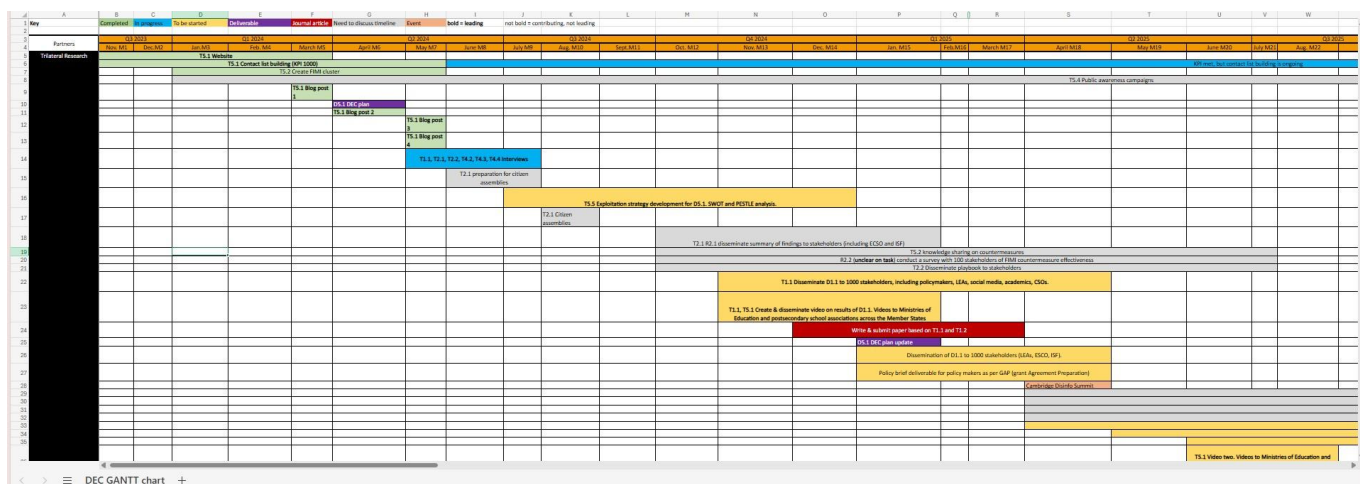
- All page descriptions across ATHENA channels, including the website, X, LinkedIn, and YouTube, feature links to each other.
- Active engagement among ATHENA partners' channels and individual team members, who will like, follow, and interact with ATHENA channels, as well as actively engage with social media posts.
- Collaboration between ATHENA partners' channels and related projects' channels, with a focus on sharing content published by ATHENA's social media channels.
- Integration of videos, newsletters, press releases, and leaflets with links to ATHENA's social media channels, ensuring seamless dissemination of information across platforms.
-

9. DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

Within ATHENA, the management of dissemination and communication activities is a dynamic process facilitated by several aspects:

- The monthly meetings of WP5 where the collective discussion of all partners converges. These gatherings serve as pivotal moments for fostering collaboration and aligning efforts towards achieving our dissemination goals. These meetings give participants a thorough update of WP5's present state and future objectives, facilitating resource allocation and decisionmaking.
- At ATHENA, the distribution and communication efforts are carefully coordinated using a Gantt chart, to help ensure deadlines are met, and that progress is methodically monitored from M1 to M36. This Gantt chart offers specific details about every work in WP5, such as the partner in charge, the actions taken, and how the jobs are distributed over the project's timeframe. By employing this structured approach, ATHENA partners can coordinate our efforts, monitor our progress and ensure the successful execution of our dissemination and communication strategies.

FIGURE 16: GANTT CHART ATHENA UPDATED



- Additionally, WP5 is strongly interconnected by actively collaborating with all other Work Packages to provide support and guidance as needed. Partners are encouraged to leverage the monthly meetings and other communication channels to tap into the collective knowledge and resources of WP5, facilitating seamless coordination and synergy across the project consortium.

10. DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

TABLE 2: DC PIs

Activity	Description	Target	Status at M15
Third-party conferences	Provide an opportunity to highly target select groups of stakeholders, enabling networking and visibility. Presenting in at least 12 conferences over three years.	Presenting in at least 12 conferences over three years.	5 conferences
Peer-reviewed publications	Targeted at academics, researchers, and policymakers to disseminate research findings. Six articles planned.	Six articles.	0
Policy briefs	Concisely present main findings and recommendations for policymakers and parliamentary committees. 10 briefs planned.	10 policy briefs.	1 policy brief
Training and education	Provide training materials to boards of education. Targeting ministries of education or competent authorities across the EU by M36.	4 F2F Trainings.	0 trainings

Webinars	Present project findings in webinars open to all stakeholders. Expected to generate material for 6 webinars.	6 webinars.	0 webinars
Press releases and fact sheets	Compile contact lists of journalists in each Member State to disseminate project updates. Six press releases and two fact sheets planned.	Six press releases, 2 factsheets.	3 press release, 1 factsheet
Flyers	Useful handouts at conferences, conventions, and fairs. One flyer planned about the project, issues, consortium, and website.	1 flyer.	1 brochure
Roll-ups	Inexpensive backdrops at conferences and workshops. Two roll-ups planned based on FIMI themes.	2 roll-ups.	1 roll-up
Videos	Short videos for YouTube, journalists, website, and training. Three videos planned.	3 videos.	0 videos
Website	Central hub for project information, partners, contact details, deliverables, and blogs. One operational website by M5.	1 operational website by M5.	1 operational website
Clustering	Collaborate with other projects focusing on disinformation and FIMI to exchange knowledge and leverage impact. Respond to consultations. Eight projects in the cluster and nine cluster meetings planned.	8 projects in the cluster and nine cluster meetings.	5 projects in the cluster, 4 meetings in (Y1)
Stakeholder Board	Establish a stakeholder board with representatives from various stakeholder groups. Twenty members meeting three times a year.	20 members, meeting 3 times a year.	48 members 3 meetings in Y1
Blogs	Share activities and insights from tasks. Thirteen blogs planned, one from each partner.	13 blogs.	7 blogs
Newsletters	Highlight news from work packages and other projects in the cluster. Three newsletters per year, each with at least 1500 opens.	Three newsletters per year, each with at least 300 opens.	2 newsletters (Y1)

Podcasts	Create podcasts on different aspects of FIMI and ATHENA's actions. Three podcasts of 10 minutes duration planned.	3 podcasts.	1 podcast
Email	Create a contact list of at least 1000 contacts from all Member States to inform them about webinars or events.	1000 contact emails.	1700 contact emails
Translations	Translate documents into all consortium languages. Eight translations of six press releases and two fact sheets planned.	Eight translations each of six press releases and two fact sheets.	Eight translations of 1 press release.
Social media performance	Performance of the social media (LinkedIn, X and YouTube)	<200 – poor, 200-500 – good, 500+ - excellent for LinkedIn & X <15-poor, 15- 40 – good, 40+ - excellent (YouTube)	LinkedIn- 449 (Good) X-91 (Poor) YouTube –16 (Good)
Social media and website	Total website visits and social media engagements	>3000	LinkedIn –35,344 engagements X- (32 posts) YouTube- 65 views Website –2,360

11. EVALUATION AND MONITORING

In order to ensure a consistent flow of dissemination, communication and exploitation activities, the previous sections set out a DEC Strategy (in terms of channels, materials, and events) as well as the KPIs that need to be reached, tied to stakeholders, messages, and DEC objectives. This section instead deals with the potential barriers to the DEC strategy as well as the methodology for monitoring (the monitoring spread sheet).

11.1 Potential barriers that may hinder dissemination and communication

Effective dissemination and communication within the ATHENA project may encounter several potential barriers that impede their success. One significant challenge arises from language and cultural differences across Europe, making it difficult to convey messages universally and ensuring they resonate with diverse audiences. As such, the project is using neutral and non-gendered language. Additionally, amidst the abundance of information available in the digital age, ATHENA's messages may struggle to stand out, particularly when competing with numerous other sources. Therefore, the project strives to disseminate and communicate its results effectively. Furthermore, despite efforts to raise awareness, there will still be stakeholders unaware of ATHENA's existence or objectives. The project has developed a contact list with 1700 contacts, will continue to disseminate its results to gain traction and to consult the project's Stakeholder Board. If we see a return of a pandemic and restrictions to mobility that might impede dissemination and communication activities, the project will then place more emphasis on

virtual activities such as online workshops and webinars. A potential challenge to the project's success includes the disruptive impact of the ongoing conflict resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This conflict may interfere with societal functions and the continuous progression of the project, particularly impacting logistics, communication and stakeholder engagement across affected regions. To address these disruptions, WP5 will implement countervailing measures. These include developing tailored communication strategies that can adapt to rapidly changing geopolitical contexts, enhancing capacity-building initiatives to bolster local and regional resilience, and fostering strong collaborations with a diverse range of stakeholders to ensure robust support networks. Continuous evaluation and adaptation of these efforts are necessary to maintain effectiveness and achieve the project's goals despite the uncertain environment. This comprehensive approach aims to mitigate the adverse effects of the conflict on the project's deliverables and overall impact.

Moreover, it should be acknowledged that security research can entail sensitive topics. Although it is not expected that the project will generate major controversial results and outcomes that may cause societal rejection (= bad publicity). The partners will create a crisis management plan to respond to such a threat.

11.2 Monitoring spreadsheet

The monitoring of dissemination, exploitation and communication activities is carried out through a quantitative evaluation based on the verification of the implemented dissemination, exploitation, and communication activities by consulting the data entered by the ATHENA partners into the Monitoring spread sheet. The Monitoring spread sheet serves as a central hub for the dissemination and communication activities carried out by the consortium. The spreadsheet tracks publications, social media posts, and the attendance of conferences and other events, staying updated on upcoming events where ATHENA can participate, thus ensuring proactive engagement and maximizing opportunities for outreach. This coordinated approach enables effective monitoring of dissemination and communication efforts and ensures that ATHENA's presence and impact are consistently promoted across various platforms and channels. The monitoring spreadsheet is constantly updated by the WP5 lead, EOS, and project partners. ‘

FIGURE 17: MONITORING SPREADSHEET

Dissemination activities - - - > scroll right for audiences							
Partner	Activity	Description (including objective/s with reference to a specific project output)	LINK	Type of activity (SELECT FROM DROPDOWN MENU)	Date	Outcome (INDICATE KPI)	Status (SELECT FROM MENU)
4 UCY	Presentation on ATHENA	Symposium on Whole-of-Society Counter Disinformation, Organized by the Marshall Center (US DoD/OE DoD), the Cypriot MfC		Conferences	12 - 14/12/2023	1 of 12 conf. presentations; 30 people in attendance	Delivered
5 RSE	Collaboration on ATHENA goA	Collaboration with the Applied AI department of Gothenburg University where students developed small workable prototyp, education and training events		Conferences	1 - 31/10/2023	Three functional prototypes for analyzing disinformation	Delivered
6 FORTH	Presentation on ATHENA	6th CF SEDSS III Conference, 2nd ETS & exhibition		Conferences	22-24/11/2023	Presented Disinformation FIMI and ATHENA	Delivered
7 EUT	Press Release		ATHENA - ISLANDOR-Test-Areas-at-a-Glance January 2024.pdf - All Documents (sharpoint.com)				Delivered
8 HfocD	Project Presentation	Presentation of the project at a webinar of the sister project Femi		Collaboration with EU funded projects	4/3/2024	Presented Disinformation FIMI and ATHENA	Delivered
9 UCY	Invited talk	FIMI Campaigns: Threats, Analysis and Mitigation	Conference on Research and Innovation in Defense, Ministry of Defence, Republic of Cyprus	Event (conference, talks, seminar, meeting)	21/9/24	Presented Disinformation FIMI and ATHENA	Delivered
10 UCY	Poster presentation of ATHENA: Detecting, Analyzing and Countering Foreign Informa	6th Summit on Gender Equality in Computing		Conferences	13-14/6/2024	Presented Disinformation FIMI and ATHENA	Delivered
11 ISSP	Lviv Forum			Conferences			
12 EOS	Conference	EU-D Conference		Conferences	09-11/10/2024	Presented Disinformation FIMI and ATHENA	

12. EXPLOITATION PLAN

This section provides an exploitation plan for ATHENA, which the partners will update in the second half of the project.

12.1 Exploitation strategy and plan

The exploitation strategy and plan define the pathway for the successful exploitation of the ATHENA project results.

The overall strategy focuses on defining

- the results that can be exploited,
- target users (including secondary implementers and front-running partners),
- exploitation activities,
- a preliminary business plan,
- knowledge, data and IPR management policies.

12.2 ATHENA key exploitable results, target users and exploitation activity

ATHENA will produce several exploitable results, and the table below provides an overview of the key exploitable results outlining ATHENA tools both in a non-commercial context (contribution to knowledge advancement and creation of research methodologies) and within a commercial setting (tools widely applicable to cryptocurrency and darknet investigations).

- **Exploitable results:** the exploitable results include reports from desk-based research, analysis of data, impact assessments, improved countermeasures, a toolkit and dashboard. These results will enhance knowledge advancement and provide applicable commercial tools for combatting FIMI.
- **Target users:** the main users who will be targeted for exploitation for the ATHENA results include policymakers, academics, industry, the general public and CSOs. These are detailed further in the exploitation gap analysis.
- **Exploitation activity:** ATHENA has developed a stakeholder contact list of 1,776 contacts comprising policymakers, CSOs, LEAs, academics, industry partners, software developers, journalists, CERTs, CSIRTs and other researchers that will form the basis of our exploitation activities. For all research-based results, partners will send executive summaries to stakeholders as well as write blogs, book chapters, articles and attend conferences to ensure that results reach as wide an audience as possible. Additionally, partners will write and disseminate at least 10 policy briefs based on ATHENA primary research findings to all 27 Member State parliaments. Other exploitation activities include disseminating videos, press releases, social media channels, podcasts, webinars and maintaining the project website. More detail for each result is provided in table 3 below.

TABLE 3: EXPLOITABLE RESULTS, TARGET GROUPS AND EXPLOITATION AVENUES

Exploitable results	Description of result	Target users	Exploitation activity
Result 1.1	A case study analysis of 32 manifestations of FIMI. This result includes a DISARM based analysis of FIMI cases from Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, India, Turkey and Saudi Arabia and the TTPs used by the attackers in these cases. It provides an insight into the political, behavioural, societal and technological aspects of identified FIMI campaigns.	Policymakers, academics, CSOs	An executive summary of the deliverable was sent to the project's contact list. The report has been submitted to Springer for publication as a book. A press release about the report was translated into several languages and posted to partners' contacts.

Result 1.2	An analysis of attackers' TTPs. This provides a technical, data-oriented analysis of existing TTPs applied in FIMI campaigns, focusing on the challenges of identifying FIMI campaigns out of seemingly uncoordinated messages spread across different media platforms and of attributing them to specific foreign actors.	Academics and cybersecurity practitioners, such as computer emergency response teams (CERTs) and cybersecurity incident response teams (CSIRTs).	This result was included, along with R1.1, in the D1.1 deliverable. Partners will create blogs and/or policy briefs targeted at specific groups to further spread the results.
Result 1.3	An analysis of political, behavioural and societal consequences of FIMI. This result will show stakeholders the persuasive narratives used in FIMI to affect people's perceptions of reality and undermine societal trust in governance and its informational veracity.	Academics, policymakers, CSOs	An executive summary will be sent to the project's contact list. The deliverable will be converted into a journal article of use to researchers and academics.
Result 2.1	An assessment and impact analysis of counter measures against FIMI. This will improve the ability of governments, law enforcement and public authorities to respond to and mitigate against FIMI campaigns.	Policymakers, academics, CSOs, industry. There is a specific interest in members of EOS, ISF and ECSO	This result will be recorded in a report, and the executive summary will be sent to the stakeholder contact list. EOS will disseminate this result to their membership and LAU/FORTH will circulate it to ECSO.
Result 2.2	The development of new and improved countermeasures against FIMI. This will provide actionable advice on how to counter FIMI according to their characteristics and in line with legal and ethical requirements.	Industry, academics, policymakers, LEAs	This result will be detailed in a report that will be sent to the ATHENA contact list and distilled into blogs and policy briefs.
Result 3.1	A collection of FIMI data impacting Europe. This will develop the FIMI dataset collected and will be displayed in a knowledge graph and analysed in the FIMI toolbox.	Policymakers, industry and academics.	The FIMI database will be open access and disseminated to stakeholders for use beyond the project.
Result 3.2	A knowledge graph to store the harmonised data from Result 3.1. This will be used for data analysis, such as signal detection and semantic uplift, and be available to trusted researchers for further analysis.	Industry, academics, CSOs	The knowledge graph will be sent to the ATHENA stakeholders, specifically trusted researchers and European security organisations, for testing and future use.

Result 3.3	A FIMI toolbox that includes existing SOTA tools from previous EU projects with new tools developed in ATHENA. This will integrate previous developments with new tools aimed at addressing the additional needs of stakeholders.	Industry, policymakers	The toolbox will be highlighted at conferences and events and external stakeholders will be encouraged to use the tool beyond the project.
Result 3.4	An ATHENA dashboard for analytics visualisation. This will provide actionable intelligence to policymakers and other stakeholders as well as reports, briefing documents and case studies for individual FIMI situations throughout Europe.	Policymakers, academics, CSOs	A demonstrator of the dashboard will be shared with stakeholders for further testing and results will be shared with a wider audience via blogs and articles.
Result 3.5	An evaluation of the ATHENA dashboard. This will test the functionality of the dashboard and determine the usability of the tools.	Industry, policymakers, academics	The executive summary of the report will be sent to project stakeholders alongside the dashboard to highlight its functionality.
Result 4.1	An assessment of current legal and ethical frameworks deployed against FIMI. This will include laws and generally acceptable principles to help counter FIMI.	Policymakers	The partners will send a press release about the result to the contact list, prepare a blog and journal article based on the result.
Result 4.4	A questionnaire to help stakeholders determine whether information could be FIMI. This will be available open access and target the public and media.	The public, media, CSOs	The questionnaire will be promoted on social media and the project website, as well as disseminated through the ATHENA network to reach the wider public. The partners will also disseminate a press release in multiple languages.
Result 4.3	A set of recommendations and response options for policymakers, CSOs, academia and citizens to combat FIMI.	All target groups	Broad outreach of recommendations as well as targeted policy briefs for policymakers.
Result 5.3	Trainings and training materials- open online course or MOOC This will provide trainings and training materials to stakeholder groups.	Policymakers, departments of education in Member States; University students and faculties in departments of IT, political	Open online course or MOOC available to all Member States; in-person trainings in Finland, Ireland, Cyprus, Germany; lectures in universities; a 20-page briefing paper; open deck of PowerPoint slides in English and ATHENA partner languages.

		science, communication s.	
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12.3 Exploitation roles and responsibilities of ATHENA partners

The ATHENA consortium comprises practitioners, fact-checkers, universities and SMEs addressing the industrial and research content that will ensure the identification and development of capabilities and innovations from research to operations and the exploitation and dissemination of results in the EU and the global market. This mix of partners will achieve the project's objectives and ensure that our results are exploited and taken up by end users bolstering our fight against FIMI.

All ATHENA partners are dedicated to the exploitation of the project results and will jointly ensure that stakeholders can use the results beyond the duration of the project. The partners will grant non-exclusive licences to their results under fair and reasonable conditions to any legal entities that commit to rapidly and broadly exploit the resulting products and services. Partners must indicate the owner(s) of the results (results ownership list) in the final report. Beneficiaries will also use the Horizon Results Platform to find interested parties to exploit those results.

12.4 Exploitation gap analysis

This section will examine the stakeholders who are key to the exploitation of ATHENA results as well as the challenges in getting those stakeholders to exploit the results. The analysis also considers how ATHENA can address the gaps in each of these stakeholder sectors.

Polymakers

Polymakers, including national and local authorities as well as European lawmakers, are a central target of ATHENA's exploitation activities. FIMI impacts the public perceptions of authorities, laws and elections and, therefore, developing new ways to understand and combat FIMI is an important concern of these stakeholders, and they will benefit from ATHENA's results. Exploiting ATHENA's results should result in policy changes at every level.

There are plans in place to reach these important stakeholders. First, the consortium has created a large Stakeholder Board of more than 20 members as of January 2025, comprising polymakers, industry partners, academics and LEAs. The Stakeholder Board, which meets three times a year, provides feedback on the ATHENA research and solutions and on FIMI issues of concern to the project. Additionally, partners are encouraged to promote all ATHENA results to relevant ministries in their countries as well as local and European lawmakers.

The outputs of ATHENA will be of interest to polymakers, as FIMI is becoming increasingly prevalent with the ubiquity of social media. The recommendations and toolkits developed in ATHENA can help polymakers address the rise in FIMI.

Academics

ATHENA will produce tools, datasets and research that academic stakeholders can use for current and future research. The ATHENA consortium has partners from three academic institutions and three research organisations who will be the first of the academic stakeholders across Europe to exploit the results. Many universities across Europe have a program or research centre dedicated to disinformation; consequently, they will be prime stakeholders for exploiting ATHENA results.

Industry

The tools, data and research that are the results of ATHENA can be exploited by industry and SMEs. ATHENA's data and toolkit can be used by SMEs to further develop tools and innovations in the form of commercial solutions. The consortium includes three SMEs – Trilateral, ISSP, Storyzy -- that will benefit from the research and technical outputs, and there is the potential for commercial solutions to be developed from the project. **Civil societies organisations (CSOs)**

CSOs have the opportunity to influence public opinion and policymakers and to spread information to the public. There are two CSOs in the consortium, EU-Disinfo and Maldita. These organisations will be able to exploit these results through policy briefs and information campaigns and will employ their own networks of other CSOs and NGOs who can also exploit these results.

12.5 Exploitation activities

The exploitation plan includes engagement with policymakers, industry, academics and CSOs to promote the adoption of ATHENA's tools, recommendations and research. The consortium partners will support the uptake of the ATHENA results throughout the project. The consortium will generate active interest in the project results and encourage stakeholders to use and build on ATHENA's results. While table 3 above highlights specific activities for each result, table 4 below demonstrates the exploitation activities that partners will undertake to encourage the use of project tools and solutions for further research or commercial activities.

TABLE 4: EXPLOITATION ACTIVITIES

Exploitation aims	Exploitation activities
Build a network of stakeholders to enhance uptake of results	ATHENA established a Stakeholder Board at the onset of the project and the consortium will continue to foster its relationship with the Board, which comprises 23 members (as of January 2025), who are academics, industry researchers, cybersecurity practitioners, LEAs and policymakers. All results are shared with the board, and they are encouraged to use and disseminate them further. The Board members have played a robust role in shaping ATHENA research by participating in interviews, workshops and by giving presentations on their FIMI research. This will expand the reach of the ATHENA results and create a healthy environment for knowledge sharing.

Create synergies and encourage up-take of solutions	ATHENA coordinators and other partners are encouraged to foster synergies with other projects and present the results as widely as possible. ATHENA has established a FIMI cluster of six related projects that meet regularly to share knowledge, disseminate each other's events, and present at workshops, conferences, EC events, and other networking venues. ATHENA partner EU-D organised a FIMI cluster networking event in Riga, 9-10 October 2024 ¹ .
Identify the competition and understand the market	The ATHENA coordinators will conduct a market analysis to be updated throughout the project.

12.6 Knowledge and IPR management

The partners will make the results of the project publicly available, but will respect all intellectual property rights (IPR), confidentiality requirements and data management within the consortium. The project coordinator is monitoring research outputs and results for any potential knowledge and IPR issues that might arise. The partners have agreed upon several important principles in the Consortium Agreement. These principles include:

1. Pre-existing (background) knowledge is specified in the Consortium Agreement.
2. Knowledge that is generated during the project (foreground) will remain the property of the partner who generated it. If more than one partner generates that knowledge and it is not possible to separate these contributions, the knowledge will be jointly owned.
3. Access rights to knowledge needed by a partner for the execution of its part in ATHENA will be granted to the partner on a royalty-free basis, unless otherwise agreed upon before the signing of the Consortium Agreement.
4. A partner will not publish any knowledge provided by another partner and identified as confidential, without the partners' prior written approval. If open-source software licences apply, the open-source licensing rules apply for publishing knowledge.

In addition to these agreed principles, several other rules apply to IP management of exploitable results within the consortium. These include the agreed rules governing publication, where partners will

publish open-access where possible and inform all partners well before publishing so that partners can raise issues over ownership if needed.

Finally, the following rules govern the exploitation of foreground knowledge. If foreground knowledge is jointly owned, each of the joint owners shall be entitled to use their jointly owned results for noncommercial research activities on a royalty-free basis and without the need for consent from the other co-owners. Each of the joint owners will also be entitled to exploit the jointly created results and grant licences to third parties if all joint owners are given 30 days' advanced notification.

12.7 ATHENA's contribution to SDGs

The ATHENA project contributes to several UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are universal, meaning they apply to all countries, not just developing nations. They emphasise the

¹ <https://project-athena.eu/strengthening-europes-response-to-fimi/>

interconnectivity of social, economic and environmental sustainability, highlighting that progress in one area often depends on progress in others. Countries are encouraged to integrate the SDGs into their national policies and frameworks. There are 17 goals covering a broad spectrum of issues such as health, education, climate change, gender equality, clean water, and economic growth and the SDGs provide a framework for achieving a better and more sustainable future by 2030.

The connection between ATHENA's commitment to contributing to SDGs and exploitation of the project results is particularly pertinent because achieving these SDGs requires practical solutions. The ATHENA project is contributing to several SDGs, which is demonstrated in table 5 below.

Overall, the ATHENA research outputs will contribute to achieving the SDGs by addressing how false and manipulated information affects our democratic processes, governance and development of our societies. While three SDG goals are specifically mentioned in the Grant Agreement, the partners look to exploit results that will contribute to other SDGs too, particularly through the continued use of recommendations, public awareness campaigns and the tools and platform.

TABLE 5: ATHENA'S CONTRIBUTION TO SDGS

Contribution to SDGs across all ATHENA outputs	
	ATHENA will contribute to SDG 3, promoting good health and well-being. It will contribute to both mental and physical health by exposing manipulated information and health-related misinformation.
	ATHENA dissemination outputs under WP5 will especially contribute to SDG 4 and promote quality education by promoting media literacy amongst citizens to enable them to critically evaluate information.
	By addressing gender specific FIMI and the exploitation of sex in FIMI (e.g., the Lisa case study in D1.1), ATHENA will contribute to SDG 5 on gender equality and use our research findings to recommend robust gender specific policy measures and awareness programs.
	ATHENA outputs will contribute to SDG 10 on reducing inequality as FIMI has the potential to create and perpetuate social divisions and political and economic inequalities within our societies. Specifically, the public awareness campaigns will bring attention to the risk of FIMI to reduce inequality

	Our ATHENA outputs in WP3 will contribute to SDG 9 by promoting sustainable industrialisation, innovation and infrastructure as we will build pathbreaking technology to counter disinformation.
	ATHENA outputs will contribute to SDG 16 on promoting peace, justice and strong institutions by creating transparency in the manipulated information landscape and empowering citizens in their democratic spirit. This in turn will strengthen our democratic institutions and rule of law. ATHENA outputs will contribute to equal access to transparent information, which is critical to maintaining democratic integrity, and provide recommendations for combatting FIMI to strengthen EU institutions.
	ATHENA will contribute to SDG 17 by building partnerships and collaborations to fight FIMI. Our collaboration through the FIMI cluster and stakeholder board provides us with an opportunity to leverage our knowledge on FIMI and share best practices strengthening our fight against FIMI.

The United Nations has acknowledged the criticality of information integrity to achieve SDGs and that threats to information integrity and veracity of information can have a negative impact of the achievement of SDGs.

12.8 Business plan

12.8.1 Value proposition

ATHENA research will be used to develop a toolkit containing current state-of-the-art tools as well as newly developed tools, a dashboard to visualise FIMI analytics and a report with FIMI case study data. These tools will be cost-effective (free of charge during the project) and user friendly, assisting policymakers, CSOs, academics and industry in understanding and combating FIMI. The full extent of the value proposition will be developed as the project progresses.

12.8.2 Business model

The partners will define the business model in the scope of the project execution and review it with the partners, especially from M26 onwards. The consortium will agree on how to maintain the project technical results, specifically the toolkit and dashboard. The partners expect to generate income from the royalties received through the third party sublicences after the project completes.

12.8.3 Market trends

To identify the feasibility of the ATHENA tools on the market, the partners will conduct a market analysis and include the results in the revised Exploitation Plan. Below (table 6) is a brief review of the tools already available on the market as well as the methods that will be used to analyse ATHENA's weaknesses and strengths within the market.

TABLE 6: REVIEW OF FIMI TOOLS

Title	Description
OSINT toolkit to detect and analyse IBD-focused FIMI	Guide for conducting open-source intelligence investigations, specifically addressing incidents of FIMI that weaponise identity-based information. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2024/EEAS-DataTeam-OsintGuidelines-04-Digital.pdf
ARM project toolkit of practical measures	Not developed yet – will provide a catalogue of tactics and procedures to develop practical countermeasures
OSAVUL AI FIMI detection	AI tool to detect FIMI https://www.osavul.cloud/fighting-fimi-with-osavul

12.8.4 Competitor analysis

Throughout the project, partners will analyse potential competitors in the FIMI market to get a better understanding of the market and how competitive it is. This work will be critical in creating a successful exploitation plan. The partners will accumulate data on competitors and present it in the final exploitation plan.

12.9 SWOT analysis

TRI conducted an initial SWOT analysis to identify ATHENA's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats and will present the final analysis in the final version of the exploitation plan. Below, figure 18 shows the initial SWOT analysis.

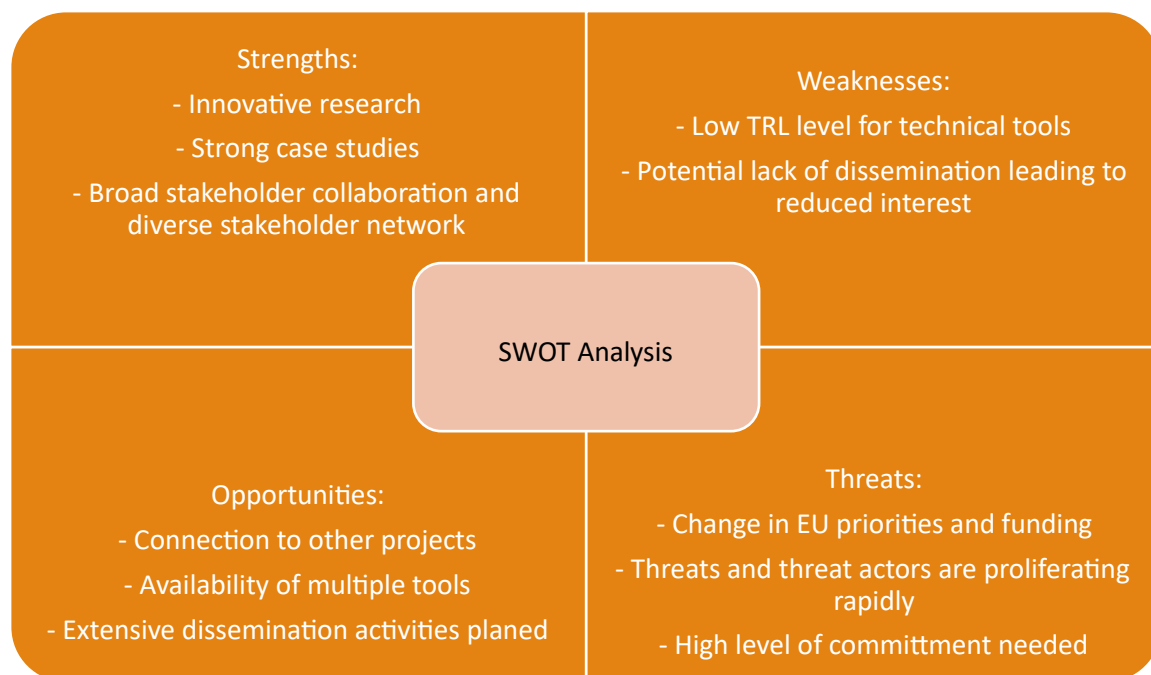
Strengths: These are aspects that benefit ATHENA. One example is the extensive case studies and background research upon which we are developing project results solutions. A strength of the ATHENA consortium is that it has 14 diverse partners from nine different countries, which have complementary competencies and networks of stakeholders.

Weaknesses: These are areas that might put ATHENA at a disadvantage on the market. One example of this is the low TRL level, which indicates that more effort is needed before our toolkit, knowledge graph and dashboard become viable market products after project completion.

Opportunities: Chances to create additional impact from a tool or solution is an opportunity. For ATHENA, the ties to sister projects for continued impact and learnings is an opportunity.

Threats: Characteristics that can undermine the project or limit its potential on the market. This includes a change in priority from the European Union away from combatting FIMI.

FIGURE 18: SWOT ANALYSIS



12.10 PESTLE analysis

The consortium conducted an initial PESTLE analysis to understand the key Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal and Environmental factors that could impact the project. The information presented below is the initial analysis, which we will update in the next iteration of the exploitation plan.

Political factors

In analysing the external political factors that could impact the project, the partners consider both influences on the project specifically and influences on combatting FIMI more generally. The partners are examining political factors at the local, national, European and global levels. Factors include regulations, funding levels, political influences, and government priorities. We mention below the most pressing political factors impacting the project.

Potential impacts on ATHENA	• Change in focus on FIMI research at the EU level • Logistical challenges in developing institutions such as a FIMI agency • FIMI influences EU policy negatively • Political considerations result in a shrinking of the budget devoted to FIMI research.
Factors influencing the combat against FIMI	• FIMI causes political destabilisation • Rising geopolitical tensions and a lack of unified infrastructure • Reduced effort devoted to fact-checking due to political influences corresponding with the rise in political leaders who peddle disinformation

Economic factors

Economic factors that could impact the project include the contraction of funding for FIMI and disinformation research as well as market factors that may impact the ATHENA tools developed during

the project. When considering economic factors that might influence attempts to combat FIMI generally, current economic trends and the cost of combatting FIMI are examined. The table below highlights some of the economic factors that might impact the project and combatting FIMI.

Potential impacts on ATHENA	• Future funding for FIMI research from the EC is reallocated to other priorities • Lack of economic impetus to further develop and market ATHENA tools after current funding ends • Overfunding of FIMI research leads to a flooding of the market with tools that are similar to ATHENA tools
Factors influencing the combat against FIMI	• Limited financial resources available for combatting FIMI, especially given the high costs associated • Financial and power imbalance between social media companies and the smaller groups attempting to combat FIMI • Constrained resources at the national level make combatting FIMI at the national level a challenge • FIMI is profitable, giving incentives to groups to continue propagating disinformation

Sociological factors

Sociological factors include demographics, education, age, income and other socio-demographic factors, as well as changes in attitudes and lifestyles. These factors are considered both for the potential impacts on the project as well as the factors influencing the combat against FIMI in general and are expanded upon below.

Potential impacts on ATHENA	• Finding individuals who are aware of FIMI is a challenge, making research with individuals difficult (e.g., our citizen assemblies) • Many individuals lack adequate media literacy, again making research challenging
Factors influencing the combat against FIMI	• Education about FIMI is fragmented • Individuals' view of FIMI are coloured by their political leanings, making it hard to combat • Lack of fact checking can lead to discrimination, especially for vulnerable groups such as LGBTQ+ • Misconceptions of what FIMI is among much of the public

Technological factors

These factors concern the existence, availability and development of technology that is relevant to both ATHENA as well as combatting FIMI in general. Technological aspects include new developments in AI and the lack of accountability in technological development. The specific influences examined are highlighted below.

Potential impacts on ATHENA	• Automation of FIMI production produces ambiguity, which is an added challenge in researching case studies and attribution • Rapid advancement in technology provides a difficult landscape for FIMI research • Advancements in technology may highlight vulnerabilities and provide avenues of research previously not examined
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Factors influencing the combat against FIMI	• The automation of FIMI produces ambiguity and a lack of accountability for bad actors • The speed of technical development to produce FIMI is outpacing counter measures • Information sharing in general occurs on the same platforms as FIMI, making it difficult to combat
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Legal factors

Legal factors include regulations and laws as well as company policies that may influence corporate actions in the fight against FIMI. Regulations could impact the project as well as attempts to combat FIMI beyond the project. Legal factors that may impact ATHENA and combatting FIMI are explained below.

Potential impacts on ATHENA	• New EU regulations and laws may impact development of ATHENA tools (AI Act, GDPR, DSA, etc.) • Lack of unified legal frameworks could influence the recommendations and fragment final solutions
Factors influencing the combat against FIMI	• Lack of coherent legal frameworks make indictments and sentencing for bad actors difficult • Lack of legal accountability for social media companies means lack of incentives to tackle disinformation problems • Limited legal provisions make it easy for mainstream FIMI producers and purveyors to circumvent current regulations.

Environmental factors

Environmental factors are issues that are influenced by or determined by the environment. This includes geographic location, climate change and other factors that might impact FIMI and the ATHENA project, which are highlighted below.

Potential impacts on ATHENA	• Climate events (storms, etc.) could disrupt research activities
Factors influencing the combat against FIMI	• The heavy demands on electricity and water by the big data centres has a deleterious, knock-on effect on the use of chatbots and LLMs to combat FIMI • Consequences of FIMI will negatively impact climate change and global health

12.11 Potential barriers to exploitation

While all partners will ensure that everything possible is done to exploit the project results, there are potential barriers outside of the project environment that need to be considered and addressed by all partners to mitigate their impact. These include:

- The challenge of ensuring that stakeholders diffuse and disseminate ATHENA results into their communities.
- The requirements for new legislation, especially for the development of a new anti-FIMI agency.
- Dynamic user needs may be misunderstood, miscommunicated or given the incorrect emphasis during analysis.

- Legal challenges from extremist groups challenging the project's findings, procedures and partners.
- The challenge of large segments of the population being susceptible to FIMI and the weaponisation of information against large segments of the population.
- The challenge of the further politicisation of information due to FIMI.

These challenges have the potential to impact exploitation by potentially creating an environment where the public, legislators and other policymakers may be hostile towards the findings and procedures of the project or exhibit a general apathy towards the project. ATHENA partners will continuously monitor these barriers and work as a whole consortium to foster an environment where the results will be taken up by other stakeholders.

12.12 Next steps

The partners will continue to refine the project's exploitation plan and make it more detailed following their monthly meetings on the plan. Throughout the next year, the coordinator and partners will continually consider exploitation of the results. The next steps include the development of individual partner's exploitation plans. These plans will benefit from the work done on other deliverables, especially the project's recommendations in D4.2. The partners have been working well together on all deliverables and are confident that will be the case as the project is moving towards the final product at M36 and produce results that will be easily exploitable. In terms of disseminating and exploiting these results among project stakeholders, the partners already have a contact list much longer than that promised in the Grant Agreement (1750+ vs 1000), and they intend to increase the list still further. A final PESTLE and SWOT analysis will be completed to understand the business opportunities of the final project results. To enhance exploitation of project results, the consortium will examine and agree to the IP rules that will be used for ongoing exploitation after the project ends. The technical tools being developed in WP3, where IP will be most applicable, will be completed in M36 and therefore the IP and data management rules that will be adhered to for further exploitation following the project end will be established prior to the finalisation of the tools. The first iteration of the data management plan and applicable rules have been submitted in M6 (D6.1). This will be done by updating the data management and examining the IP rules established in the grant agreement, as well as external regulations. Full details will be provided in the final exploitation deliverable due in M36.

13. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the updated dissemination, communication and exploitation plans for the ATHENA project lay a strong foundation for effective outreach and engagement. By organising our strategies into distinct sections and outlining tasks to be carried out in relation to each channel, the project aims to optimise our efforts in reaching our target stakeholders, including the public. The active involvement of all ATHENA partners in content production ensures a collaborative approach to dissemination and communication activities.

As ATHENA moves forward, it's essential to recognise that this document is dynamic and will evolve over time. The final updates scheduled for Month 36 will incorporate feedback, emerging trends and the finalisation of the exploitation strategy. By continually refining the defined approach, the consortium aims to enhance the project's impact and visibility.

The cornerstones of every communication strategy are the identification of stakeholder groups and their requirements, the prioritisation of outreach initiatives, and the development of key messaging. The

project aims to enhance our outreach and involvement by using an array of communication and dissemination techniques and platforms.

The effectiveness of the communication and distribution activities will be measured using performance indicators (PIs), and continuous assessment and monitoring. By embracing a systematic approach, ATHENA will optimise its impact and foster meaningful connections within targeted communities.

In summary, this deliverable sets forth a roadmap for the ATHENA project's communication and dissemination endeavours. By fostering collaboration, adaptability and innovation, ATHENA partner are committed to maximising the project's reach and impact, ultimately contributing fulfilment of our shared objectives and goals.

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14. ANNEX

14.1 Annex 1 – ATHENA Project Contacts and Points of Communication

ATHENA Project Contact: athena.comms@trilateralresearch.com ATHENA

Project Coordination team:

Dr David Wright, david.wright@trilateralresearch.com Dr.

Richa Kumar, richa.kumar@trilateralresearch.com

Dissemination & Communication Managers:

Kristian Reeson, kristian.reeson@eos-eu.com

Anna Pomortseva, anna.pomortseva@eos-eu.com

14.2 Annex 2 – ATHENA branding, logo and visual identity

Colour palette

These are the distinctive colours of the project and should be used according to the RGB or HEX codes below. No other shades of these colours are to be used, as they are not part of the ATHENA colour scheme and doing so would disrupt the project's visual identity.

Colour Palette

			
R:244 G:153 B:0 HEX: #F49900	R:252 G:173 B:58 HEX: #FDB66D	R:237 G:237 B:237 HEX: #EDEDED	R:36 G:36 B:36 HEX: #212121

2023

Font

We have chosen a standard font so partners would not need to install any special fonts on their laptops or computers. Moreover, this avoids any discrepancies that might occur when using different operating systems.

Times New Roman Bold
Times New Roman Regular

Suggested Font sizes:

Word - 12px
Printed Materials Body - 10.5-11 px
PPTX Body - 18px

2023

Always use the official logo.

Do **not** distort the logo and do **not** reduce its size to an extent where the name of the project is no longer visible or readable. It should never be recreated under any circumstances.

NO  **NO** 
ATHENA ATHENA

Always ensure you are using the correct artwork for the application.

When reproducing any logo elements, only the original high-resolution images or vector graphic files are to be used - logos must not be taken from other documents or from screenshots.

2023

Project logo



ATHENA

The ATHENA logo may be used in the above form for all documents.

The correct proportions must always be maintained if reducing the size of the logo is necessary.

14.3 Annex 3 - Templates and resources for ATHENA dissemination

[illegible]



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