TACKLING FIMI IN EUROPE

EU-FUNDED PROJECTS

TACKLING FOREIGN INFORMATION MANIPULATION AND INTERFERENCE IN EUROPE

In today's digital age, Europe is confronting sophisticated threats of **Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)** that seek to undermine our democratic values and disrupt societal cohesion.

To counter these challenges, the EU has mobilised a suite of strategic initiatives, reflected in a diverse array of projects designed to analyse, educate, and empower. These projects employ innovative tools and collaborative approaches to enhance public awareness, strengthen policy frameworks, and safeguard democratic processes. Through these collective efforts, the EU is fortifying its defences against the evolving landscape of information manipulation and interference.

ATHENA

An exposition on the foreign information manipulation and interference

ADAC.io

Attribution, Data-analysis, countermeasures, Interoperability

ARM

Research for Information Freedom

DE-CONSPIRATOR

Detecting and Countering Information Suppression from A Transnational Perspective

RESONANT

Multidisciplinary research cooperation on information suppression and diaspoRa communitiES as a target of FIMI

SAUFEX

Secure Automated Unified Framework for Exchange

Co-funded by the European Union

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ATHENA

AN EXPOSITION ON THE FOREIGN INFORMATION MANIPULATION AND INTERFERENCE

Objective: Analysing and counteracting foreign information manipulation through comprehensive analysis and the development of strategic countermeasures.

Approach: Utilising a multifaceted strategy including a disinformation analysis toolbox, dynamic dashboards, and extensive stakeholder engagement through workshops and collaborative platforms.

Impact: Enhancing EU resilience against FIMI by improving legal frameworks, public awareness, and stakeholder coordination.

The ATHENA project, launched in November 2023 by the European Union with a budget of €3 million over three years, is a strategic response to the increasing threat of foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI). In light of escalating cyber-attacks and disinformation campaigns, notably from Russia and China, ATHENA is deemed critical.

The primary goal of ATHENA is to analyse and scrutinise at least 30 instances of FIMI, dissecting the tactics, techniques, and procedures employed by perpetrators. By gaining a deep understanding of these methods, ATHENA aims to develop robust countermeasures and evaluate their societal impacts.

The ATHENA project employs a multifaceted approach to counter FIMI, encompassing various methodologies. These include analysing FIMI instances to uncover perpetrator tactics, developing tools like a disinformation analysis toolbox and dynamic dashboard for monitoring and strategizing against FIMI activities. Legal and regulatory analysis evaluates how eight EU Member States address FIMI, identifying areas for policy improvement. Public engagement initiatives empower individuals to recognise FIMI through accessible questionnaires, while stakeholder engagement involves interviews, workshops, and collaboration with a Stakeholder Board for project guidance. Furthermore, education and training initiatives in partnership with universities and schools aim to enhance awareness and defences against FIMI.

In summary, ATHENA integrates analysis, policy evaluation, public empowerment, stakeholder collaboration, and education to effectively tackle the escalating threat of FIMI.

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ADAC.IO

ATTRIBUTION, DATA-ANALYSIS, COUNTERMEASURES, INTEROPERABILITY

ADAC.iO
Attribution Data Analysis
Countermeasures Interoperability

Objective: Enhancing the EU's capabilities in identifying, analysing, and countering foreign information manipulation and interference.

Approach: Integrating contributions to international frameworks and data standards, focusing on detecting and categorising FIMI. ADAC.io's comprehensive strategy includes developing improved technical standards and methodologies for public impact studies and gender-specific analysis.

Impact: Advancing knowledge and decision-making in FIMI countermeasures, thereby strengthening the resilience of democratic institutions within the EU.

The purpose of ADAC.io is to protect democracy in the EU by strengthening the ability to deny the intended effects of FIMI on society. It aims to significantly develop upon current knowledge of how FIMI can be detected, categorised, analysed, shared, and countered.

This will be achieved through a series of coordinated contributions to the DISARM Framework, the NATO-Hybrid COE Attribution Framework, STIX 2.1, OpenCTI, ABCDE, and the FIMI countermeasures toolbox. This approach acknowledges the importance of TTPs and common data handling standards to the ability to attribute FIMI actors and further positions TTPs within the broader analytical processes that are necessary to developing countermeasures.

In addition to establishing improved technical standards and operating procedures, ADAC.io will generate research knowledge that can support better decision-making about FIMI countermeasures. For example, research will be conducted into the public impact of attribution, research methods for linguistic and visual analysis, and develop the understanding of how cross-platform manipulation evades traditional analysis methods. A specific component of gendered disinformation is incorporated, designed to better integrate gender into the technical formats.

Finally, the project will work closely with a community of practice that includes the EEAS, representatives of member states, civil society, and journalists/EDMO.

ADAC.io

TACKLING FIMI IN EUROPE

ARM

RESEARCH FOR INFORMATION FREEDOM

Objective: Investigating and conceptualising various strategies of information control used by authoritarian states that target European diaspora communities.

Approach: Conducting in-depth analyses of the information manipulation tactics employed by countries like Russia, China, Ethiopia, and Rwanda, providing a nuanced understanding of their global information strategies.

Impact: Delivering actionable countermeasures and tools to protect against information suppression, enhancing freedom of information across borders.

Coordinated by CMI, the ARM project explores authoritarian strategies for information control beyond borders. While foreign disinformation receives ample scrutiny, other forms of foreign information manipulation and intervention (FIMI) remain overlooked.

ARM conceptualises and addresses different forms of FIMI. The project will explore the extent that major global players like China and Russia, alongside Rwanda and Ethiopia, engage in transnational information suppression, particularly targeting European diaspora communities.

With a consortium of 11 partners across 8 countries, ARM will deliver a toolkit of practical countermeasures, empowering people to protect information freedom.

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DE-CONSPIRATOR

DETECTING AND COUNTERING INFORMATION SUPPRESSION FROM A TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Objective: Developing a comprehensive understanding and response to the sophisticated FIMI tactics employed particularly by Russia and China.

Approach: Utilising a mix of archival research and innovative tools like the 'Disinfor-meter' to track and analyse FIMI campaigns, supplemented by extensive legal and regulatory framework assessments.

Impact: Providing a multilingual database of FIMI incidents and tools for better safeguarding fundamental rights, thus contributing to more effective policy and defence mechanisms against FIMI.

DE-CONSPIRATOR is a Horizon Europe-funded project at the forefront of the battle against sophisticated information suppression tactics known as Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) used by Russia and China within the European Union (EU) and its partner countries (PCs).

The project not only analyses the tactics and rationale of those who initiate FIMI campaigns but also tracks how they are spread within the EU and PC through local networks. Its ultimate aim is to create a detailed, multilingual database of FIMI incidents, providing a valuable resource for understanding and countering these tactics while investigating the factors contributing to their success.

DE-CONSPIRATOR employs a comprehensive and adaptive methodology that sets it apart. It combines archival work and event dataset construction of Russian and Chinese strategic documents to analyse their textual, semantic, and discursive features. The project also plans to develop a groundbreaking tool, the 'Disinfor-meter', to identify the key factors contributing to FIMI's success. Additionally, it plans to analyse existing legal and regulatory frameworks at national and international levels to identify gaps and challenges, demonstrating its commitment to strengthening EU and PC defence against FIMI attempts.

DE-CONSPIRATOR, through its research outcomes, is poised to make a significant impact. It will enhance the understanding of how to safeguard fundamental rights against the threat of FIMI, illuminate the tactics of authoritarian regimes in information suppression, and evaluate the societal impacts of such actions. Finally, the project aims to develop practical policy guidelines, tools, and strategies to identify and counteract information suppression attempts in the EU and beyond.

https://deconspirator.eu/

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RESONANT

RESONANT

MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH COOPERATION ON INFORMATION SUPPRESSION AND DIASPORA COMMUNITIES AS A TARGET OF FOREIGN INFORMATION MANIPULATION AND INTERFERENCE

Objective: Mitigating the effects of information manipulation by analysing the tactics and tools employed by both state and non-state actors.

Approach: Focusing on detailed incident analysis and the development of methodologies and policies to enhance detection and resilience, including tabletop exercises and policy discussions**.**

Impact: Fostering behavioural change and increasing the preparedness of state authorities, culminating in a handbook of methodologies and policy recommendations.

The RESONANT project's primary objective is to analyse and document the Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) employed by both state and non-state actors in the realm of Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI). Furthermore, it aims to propose effective strategies, tools, and methodologies to mitigate the effects of information manipulation to reduce the impact and the vulnerability of the target groups, while simultaneously promoting freedom of speech and strengthening the resilience of European societies.

Specifically, RESONANT analyses information suppression incidents. Considering both the domestic and cross-border dimensions of information suppression, the project will examine the mainly adopted TTPs, as well as the available tools for their detection and analysis. For enhancing the knowledge regarding the effects of information suppression, RESONANT proposes an analysis of behavioural changes in relevant target groups as result of information suppression and of the awareness and preparation of state authorities in terms of practical legal means. Furthermore, the project will propose the definition of a methodological toolkit and policy recommendations, as well as the organisation of table top exercises and a focus group policy discussion. RESONANT will realise a handbook of methodologies and policy recommendations, contributing to communicate and disseminate practical means to counter information suppression and FIMI.

https://resonantproject.eu/

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SAUFEX

SECURE AUTOMATED UNIFIED FRAMEWORK FOR EXCHANGE

Saufex

Objective: Developing a unified framework for analysing and responding to FIMI using AI and best practices, aimed at empowering communities and enhancing cooperation.

Approach: Establishing Resilience Councils and employing AI-assisted tools to decentralise and democratise FIMI response processes, facilitating cross-stakeholder collaboration.

Impact: Transforming the theoretical concept of FIMI into robust, collective action to defend democratic integrity by creating a practical, actionable framework.

The SAUFEX project, pioneered by a consortium of frontline defenders, focuses on standardising FIMI protocols, harnessing AI-assisted decision making, and democratising governance processes. Our objectives are to develop a common framework for FIMI analysis using AI and existing best practices, decentralise FIMI response through Resilience Councils that empower affected communities, and deepen the theoretical understanding of FIMI by fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders.

FIMI, in its current state, is not a functional definition but rather a mandate for action. By establishing a unified framework, decentralising efforts, and facilitating knowledge-sharing, SAUFEX strives to transform the concept of FIMI from an abstract idea into a practical, actionable system, guiding stakeholders from the initial identification of an incident to a coordinated, collective response. This will enable more effective transnational cooperation among diverse actors, rationalise decision-making processes, and ultimately fortify the resilience of democratic societies against foreign information manipulation and interference.

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