

Questionnaire Summary

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What Experts Say About Disinformation

53 experts from Czechia, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary shared their insights into how disinformation evolves across the region. The findings highlight recurring narrative patterns, the growing role of hybrid online ecosystems, and the psychological mechanisms that make certain audiences more vulnerable.

REGIONAL DISINFORMATION LANDSCAPE

Core shared themes

- **Anti-EU** and **anti-NATO** messaging remains a consistent narrative anchor across the region
- **Pro-Russian** and **sovereignty-focused** framing appears in multiple national contexts
- **Distrust** toward liberal elites, institutions, and mainstream media continues to shape audience receptivity
- “Defence of **traditional values**” rhetoric frequently acts as a cultural framing device



Geopolitical content tends to be structured and professionally produced, while **health** and **social issues** often spread organically within communities.

Country-specific patterns

Czechia & Slovakia:

- Strong **anti-EU** and **anti-Western** framing
- Significant overlap with **pro-Russian** narratives
- Post-COVID developments and political crises have intensified frustration and institutional distrust
- Narratives are often **identity-driven**

Poland:

- Domestic political polarisation dominates the landscape
- **Internal political conflict** often replaces external actors

Hungary:

- Government-linked narratives reinforce pro-sovereignty and **anti-liberal** frames
- Frequent overlap between official messaging and broader propaganda ecosystems
- Communication is more **ideologically** structured

HOW DISINFORMATION SPREADS

Platforms

- **Facebook** and **YouTube** remain dominant distribution channels
- **Telegram** and **TikTok** continue to grow, particularly among **younger audiences**
- E-mail chains and messaging applications persist among older demographic groups



AI & Automation

- **Bots**, synthetic media, and **deepfakes** are emerging as key enablers
- **State-aligned actors** often set overarching themes, later amplified by influencers and online communities
- Disinformation circulates through **hybrid networks**, from mainstream comment sections to closed groups

PSYCHOLOGICAL DRIVERS OF DISINFORMATION



Belief-Based System

- Disinformation often provides **psychological comfort** in times of uncertainty
- Key emotional drivers include **fear**, resentment, perceived injustice, and the **desire for belonging**
- Simple explanations for complex problems reinforce identity alignment and **community cohesion**
- Narratives function not only as information but as **identity reinforcement**



Cognitive mechanisms

- **Confirmation bias** and selective exposure encourage users to seek reinforcing content
- **Group belonging** and social validation strengthen in-group cohesion through sharing behaviour
- **Authority bias** increases reliance on familiar voices or self-declared experts
- **Emotional contagion** allows anger and fear to spread faster than factual corrections



Exposure alone does not explain belief adoption – underlying **emotional needs** play a decisive role.

WHO IS AT RISK AND WHAT CAN BE DONE



Who is at Risk

- **Older citizens** (50+) with limited digital literacy and higher trust in traditional or semi-traditional media
- **Younger users** consuming fast-paced visual content and algorithm-driven feeds
- Individuals with **low trust in institutions**, particularly governments, media, the EU, and NATO
- Groups experiencing **social marginalisation** or identity anxiety



What Works

- **Educational initiatives** focused on analytical thinking and media literacy
- **Institutional and regulatory measures** improving transparency, accountability, and detection mechanisms
- **Community-based** strategies that build positive counter-narratives and local resilience



Education delivers slower results but remains **essential** for **long-term** societal resilience.