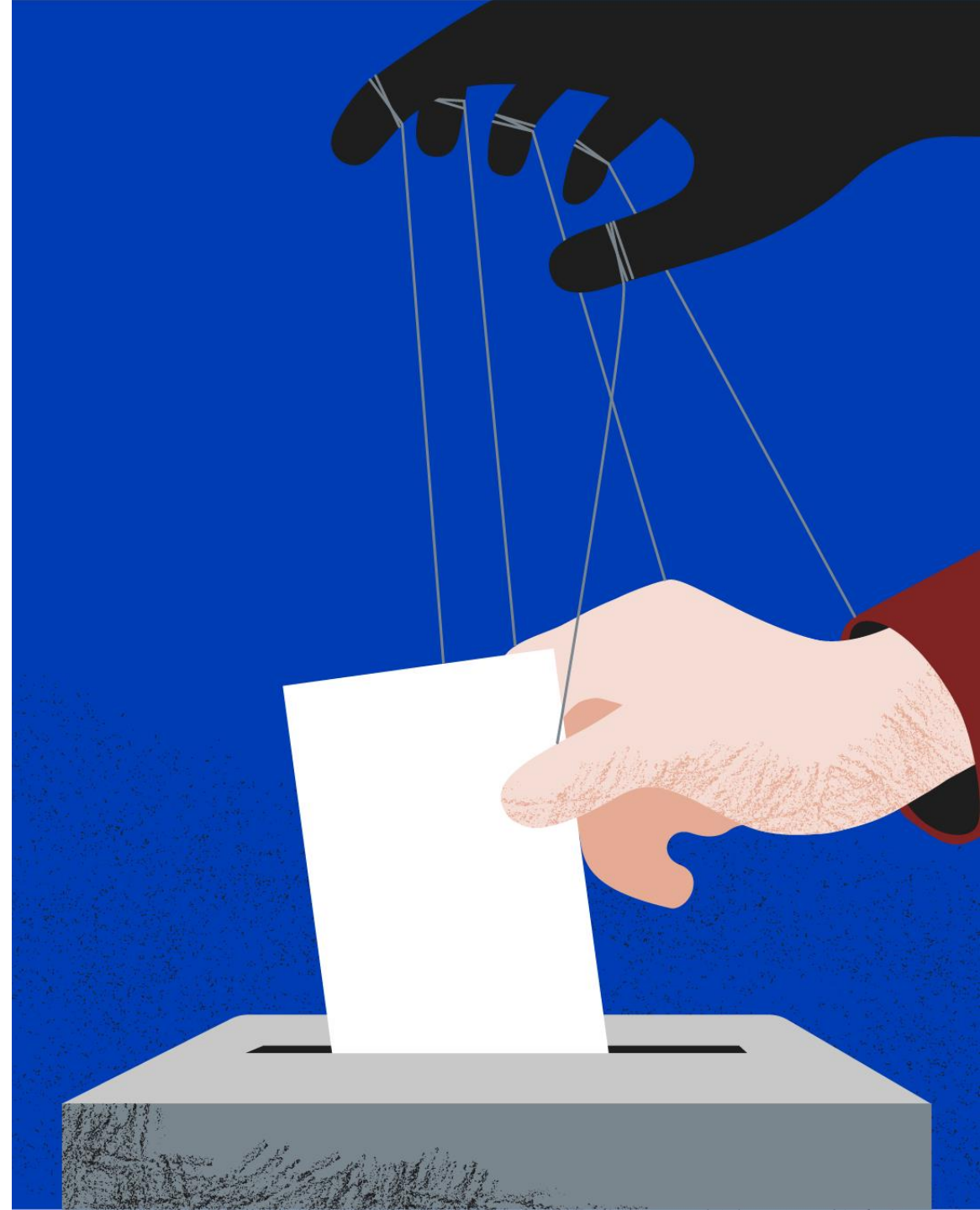


Disinformation and narratives targeting elections

Webinar for Europe Direct Centres
17 October 2023

Sara Ahnborg,
Spokesperson's Unit,
European Parliament



Defending democracy against information manipulation

“We face a toxic online battle of scale that threatens the very basis of our free societies and our free elections. This is something we must first learn to understand, and then to counter.”

Roberta Metsola,
President of the European Parliament,
G7 Speakers' Conference,
Berlin, September 2022

Defending democracy against information manipulation

“disinformation and other information manipulation (...) can prevent citizens from making informed choices or discourage them from political participation altogether”

“on the eve of the 2024 European elections increased interference and information manipulation activity is expected...”

European Parliament resolution of 1 June 2023 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation

Narratives targeting elections

Narratives:

- Elections are stolen / pre-determined
- Voting makes no difference / don't go vote
- Political and business elites control everything
- Democracies are hypocritical

Hijacking high-profile topics:

- Russia/Ukraine
- Health (Covid)
- Environment
- Migration
- Equality issues

Example: 'Don't go vote' message

BEMÆRK Denne artikel blev udgivet for over en måned siden

Forbyder Koranen muslimer at stemme til folketingsvalget?

FAKTATJEK 31. MAJ 2019 15:10 8 MIN LÆSETID



Foto: Kristian Juul Pedersen / Ritzau Scanpix



- Den islamiske organisation Hizb ut Tahrir opfordrer muslimer til ikke at stemme ved folketingsvalget
- Det strider mod islam at stemme ved et demokratisk valg, mener organisationen
- Men koranen har ikke nogen vers om folketingsvalg eller deltagelse i demokrati, og det er heller ikke solidt baseret på nogen som helst dominerende tradition

Skrevet af: [Caroline Tranberg](#), [Andreas Søndergaard Petersen](#)

BEMÆRK:

Denne artikel blev udgivet i 2019 og kan derfor indeholde enkelte detaljer, der ikke længere er tidssvarende.

Må muslimer stemme til folketingsvalg? Det er et spørgsmål, der rejser sig, næsten hver gang der er valg i Danmark. Og i år er ingen undtagelse.

Hizb ut Tahrir forbyder muslimer at stemme ved folketingsvalget. Vi foreskriver, det demokratiske

Example: Discouragement from voting (hybrid incident)

Bomb threats close dozens of schools across Bulgaria



By Euronews with AP • Updated: 30/03/2023

Bomb threats close schools across Bulgaria as general elections are due on Sunday.

Dozens of schools across Bulgaria were closed and students evacuated for a third consecutive day on Wednesday following bomb threats that were made by email and phone.

Students had to be evacuated and police stepped in to search for explosives. No bombs have been found so far.

The motive is unclear but with schools used as polling stations, the disruption may be linked to Bulgaria's general election on Sunday.

Most of the threats received were directed at schools in the capital, Sofia, and in the Black Sea ports of Varna and Burgas.

Example: Slovak elections

INTERNATIONAL · RUSSIA

Slovakia accuses Russia of election interference

The accusation concerns 'deliberately dissemination misinformation' from the Russian foreign intelligence chief concerning Slovakia's election on Saturday, September 30.

Le Monde with AFP

Published on October 2, 2023, at 6:33 pm (Paris), updated on October 2, 2023, at 8:43 pm · 1 min.

Trolls in Slovakian Election Tap AI Deepfakes to Spread Disinfo



One such video features a two-minute-long conversation in which the leader of the progressive party, Michal Simecka, above, appears to discuss buying votes from the Roma minority with a journalist. *Photographer: Vladimir Simicek/AFP/Getty Images*

Examples: Questioning election integrity

- Fake poll used to prove results are wrong (NL)
- Claims about unsafe voting boxes (DE)
- Technical error in TV news used as proof of irregularities (FR)
- Stories about pens with disappearing ink (SL, ES, FI)
- Internet voting claimed unsafe (EE)
- False claims of some parties excluded for voters abroad (IT)
- Stamps have wrong colour (SK)

Example: Distrust in politicians - False MEP cocaine story

GraphicW  [@GraphicW5](#)

A video of alleged cocaine use in the European Parliament stirs up a sense of class protest in German and European protesters ahead of more strikes.



406K views

21:25 · 25/03/2023 · **1,3M** Views

Dmitry Polyanskiy  [@DpoL_un](#)
Russia government official

Zelenskiy should be a MEP after he runs bankrupt in Ukraine. He will not even have to learn anything! 😏

GraphicW  [@GraphicW5](#) · 3d

A video of alleged cocaine use in the European Parliament stirs up a sense of class protest in German and European protesters ahead of more strikes.



Jaume Duch  [@jduch](#)

Disinformation often targets the European Parliament. Some people are claiming a video shows a politician allegedly taking drugs in the EP chamber. The claim is clearly false. The video is not filmed in the EP, it is from 2019, and it does not show an MEP.

[#ThinkBeforeYouShare](#)
Oversat Tweet

 [@redacted](#)

A video of alleged cocaine use in the European Parliament stirs up a sense of class protest in German and European protesters ahead of more strikes.



Manipulated information: Real EP documents misrepresented



Motion for a resolution - B9-0169/2022
European Parliament

[Download](#)

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION on creating a European compensation fund for victims of the COVID-19 vaccines:

17.3.2022

pursuant to Rule 143 of the Rules of Procedure

- Comirnaty (Pfizer, BioNTech)
- Janssen COVID-19 vaccine
- Spikevax (Moderna vaccine)
- Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca vaccine)



Julio B. @JulioB

El Parlamento Europeo reconoce que 1.000.000 de personas de ese continente han sufrido secuelas adversas graves como consecuencias de las vac-unas. La más dañina Pfizer

[Translate Tweet](#)



Parlamento Europeo

23.9.2021

B9-0476/2021 132k 45k

PROPUESTA DE RESOLUCIÓN

presentada de conformidad con el artículo 143 del

Best practices – national elections

- **“Whole-of-society” approach**
- **Strong media landscape > support for independent journalism**
- **Pro-active communication to the public**
 - **Election technicalities**
 - **Awareness-raising (“what are we facing?”)**
- **Debunking / fact-checking**
- **Positive communication > “we are prepared!”**
- **Media literacy**

Resilience-building, pre-bunking

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the Valimised website. The URL in the address bar is <https://www.valimised.ee/index.php/en/internet-voting/i-voting-fact-check-myth-and-reality>. The website header includes the Valimised logo, navigation links for Accessibility and Sitemap, a search bar, and language options for Estonian (Est), English (Eng), and Russian (Rus). The main navigation menu includes links for Parliamentary elections 2023, Archive, Internet voting (highlighted), Estonian elections in a nutshell, News, and Electoral organizers. The breadcrumb trail shows the path: Home > Internet voting > I-voting fact check: myth and reality. On the left, a sidebar menu lists: Internet voting in Estonia, Guidelines, I-voting fact check (highlighted), Frequently asked questions, More about i-voting, Documents, Observing and auditing, and Results of i-voting. The main content area features the title 'I-voting fact check: myth and reality' with a print icon. Below the title, there is an introductory paragraph: 'Before every election, rumours about i-voting start to circulate that have nothing to do with reality. Below is a selection of some of the most common myths, together with an explanation of how things really are.' This is followed by two paragraphs: 'Elections managers and the agencies exercising supervision over them are working every day to ensure that elections in Estonia are as secure and reliable as possible. We underline that manipulating election results is a criminal offence punishable by a fine or imprisonment. Therefore, if something seems to be really wrong, you should report it to the police as soon as possible.' Below this, a grey box contains two items: a green checkmark followed by 'REALITY: All i-voting operations are monitored in real time by experts and several in-depth audits have been carried out on the functioning of the system.' and a red X followed by 'MYTH: I-voting operations have never been checked by any external experts.' At the bottom, a paragraph of text states: 'Facts: All i-voting operations are checked each time by internationally certified auditors of information systems. The e-voting system has been thoroughly examined on several occasions, the most recent audit was the process audit commissioned by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications in 2021 and conducted by KPMG. The audit confirmed that Estonia's i-elections ensure a high level of secrecy of voting, resilience of information systems, strength of security schemes and independence of the voter. I-voting has also been observed and analysed by OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) observation missions and expert groups in the 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019 elections. Each time before

Source: Estonian electoral authorities,
www.valimised.ee

Media literacy

Appendix I: Indicators, Scores and Overall Ranking in Media Literacy Index 2022

Media Literacy Index 2022: Indicators, Scores and Overall Ranking										
Indicator/ Ranking	Freedom of the Press score by Freedom House	Press Freedom Index by Reporters without Borders	PISA score in reading literacy	PISA score in scientific literacy	PISA score in mathematical literacy	Tertiary Education enrolment	Trust in People	E- participation	Overall Score 2022	Cluster
Rank (1-41)	Country	(0-100)	(0-100)	(0-100)	(0-100)	(0-100)	(0-100)	(0-100)	(0-100)	(1 to 5)
1	Finland	72	76	76	68	77	70	88	73	1
2	Norway	77	83	66	65	61	60	92	65	1
3	Denmark	72	79	67	69	63	59	93	75	1
4	Estonia	67	76	77	76	82	52	53	81	1
5	Ireland	65	76	75	64	64	53	82	56	1
6	Sweden	73	76	69	65	66	55	82	50	1
7	Switzerland	71	66	69	72	64	41	77	65	1
8	Netherlands	73	58	59	74	68	64	76	75	1
9	Germany	63	65	65	64	68	51	61	38	2
10	Iceland	69	66	54	61	53	55	82	42	2

Source: Open Society Institute Sofia, "Media Literacy Index 2022"

The upside
Finland

How Finland starts its fight against fake news in primary schools

Country on frontline of information war teaches everyone from school pupils to politicians how to spot slippery information



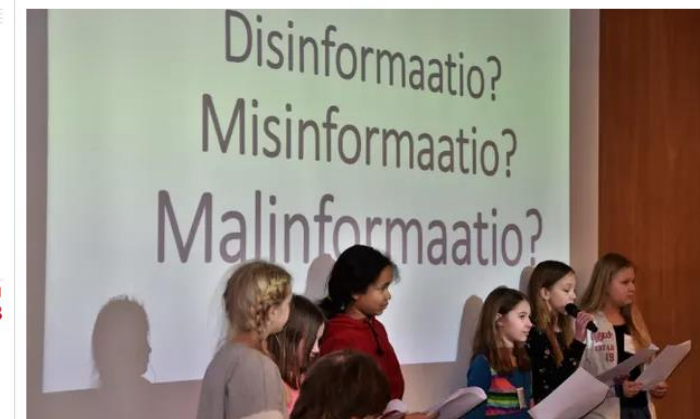
Jon Henley in Helsinki

@jonhenley

Wed 29 Jan 2020 12:16 GMT



288



Primary school pupils in Helsinki explain the difference between misinformation, disinformation and mal-information. Photograph: Satu Rakkolainen-Sossa

You can start when children are very young, said Kari Kivinen. In fact, you should: "Fairytale work well. Take the wily fox who always cheats the other animals with his sly words. That's not a bad metaphor for a certain kind of politician, is it?"

With democracies around the world threatened by the seemingly unstoppable onslaught of false information, Finland - recently rated Europe's most resistant nation to fake news - takes the fight seriously enough to teach it in primary school.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/28/fact-from-fiction-finlands-new-lessons-in-combating-fake-news>

What can you do?

- Inform yourself (elections general, euvdisinfo.eu , trainings, games, elections technicalities)
- When in doubt (too good/bad to be true...) – fact-check
- Support good journalism & reporting
- Engage in democracy – work with EP Liaison offices
- Talk to friends
- Join together.eu



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the European Parliament website. On the left is the European Parliament logo. On the right are two dropdown menus: 'Menu' and 'EN'. Below the navigation bar, the main heading reads 'European elections 2024' in a large, bold font. Underneath this, the dates '6-9 June 2024' are displayed in a dark blue box. Two main links are visible: 'How elections work →' and 'Election results →'. Below the 'How elections work' link, there is a short paragraph of text: 'Find out what European elections are about, when and how they take place and more.' Below the 'Election results' link, there is another short paragraph: 'Find the results of previous European elections and...'



Thank you!

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