

Framework for civil society action against disinformation

The amplification of disinformation attacks in European societies in recent years continues to threaten the democratic processes and to shrink the democratic space in Europe. This has been especially true in vulnerable regions like Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). In response to these challenges, ECAS has been steadily building expertise in the domain of countering disinformation and building the resilience of civil society organisations, including through its campaigns in the region throughout 2022 and 2023. During this time, ECAS fostered the creation of civil society coalitions responding to particular disinformation narratives in Bulgaria, Slovenia, Hungary, Czechia and Poland. As a result, hundreds of thousands of citizens across these five countries were successfully engaged in an array of social media campaigns, educational videos, public debates and trainings dispelling disinformation myths and promoting critical thinking. The implementation of the campaigns presented an opportunity to draw practical lessons on the key factors for a successful anti-disinformation campaign. On the basis of those, ECAS is putting forward the following framework, aimed at assisting civil society to counter disinformation in a quick, timely and effective manner.

Lessons learnt
from CSO
anti-disinformation
campaigns in Central
and Eastern Europe,
supported by ECAS
in 2022-2023.

01



**BUILD A VERSATILE CSO COALITION AND CLEARLY
DIVIDE RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN ITS MEMBERS**

Include organisations that bring expertise across several relevant fields (e.g. media, communications, tech, policy, citizen engagement, etc.) Media partners play a crucial role in promoting campaigns. Divide responsibilities between the different organisations by setting up task forces in each field of work.

**DEVELOP MEANINGFUL
ACTIVITIES FOR THE CAMPAIGN**



02

Include capacity building for coalition members, offering a general introduction to disinformation and communications through pre-recorded materials. Provide training on specific disinformation narratives, target groups, content production, and strategies for addressing negative comments and smear attacks.

03



DEDICATE TIME AND RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH

Research disinformation narratives, target audiences, and effective strategies tailored to the audience's needs, comprehension level, and location. Assess the number of messages that can be effectively introduced with limited resources. If the issue is not relevant for the whole country, focus on targeting specific regions.

**BE PREPARED TO ADAPT THE PLANNED
ACTIVITIES TO NEW CIRCUMSTANCES**



04

If the planned activities do not attract enough interest among the target groups, be prepared to adapt to the new circumstances accordingly.

05



**TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CONCURRENT EVENTS
TO INCREASE AND MEASURE IMPACT**

Align the campaign with current events such as referenda, public debates, policy decisions, protests, or elections to maximise free external media coverage for campaign products. Use this public momentum to create meaningful indicators for measuring impact.

**USE INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO
DELIVER THE CAMPAIGN'S MESSAGES**



06

Capture the attention of the target population by using humour, analogies to various art forms, or tech solutions (e.g. smartphone applications, computer games). Bring on board a creative influence within the CSO coalition for this purpose.