



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation – FSC Chairpersonship Side Event Vienna, 22 November 2023

EU Statement on Information Integrity in the Military Space

1. Madame Chair, we would first like to thank you for putting this important topic on our agenda and to the distinguished speakers for their enlightening presentations. As High Representative Josep Borrell says, we now live in a permanent ‘battle of narratives’ about the issues that determine our future.
2. We, as FSC delegates, witness this happening in the FSC at every meeting when even clear facts are distorted by one participating State. Russian systematic disinformation strategies at the political level have been prevalent even before the beginning of this war of aggression. For instance, many of you remember how Russia claimed in the FSC that the build-up of forces before the invasion of Ukraine on 22 February 2022 was for training purposes only.
3. Disinformation, a false or misleading content that is disseminated with the intention to deceive or secure gain may cause public harm. While misinformation, also false or misleading, can be shared without malicious intent its effects can still be harmful. As such, the spread of both disinformation and misinformation can have a range of harmful consequences, by polarising debates and undermining trust in democratic structures. As Russia continues weaponising information in its full-scale and hybrid war of aggression against Ukraine, and as this can also be seen in other conflicts, we need to address this topic here.
4. In the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, all participating States committed to refrain from propaganda for wars of aggression. Underlined again in March 2022 by OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Teresa Ribeiro, the exploitation of the media for harmful disinformation in the context of an armed conflict is a clear violation of our OSCE commitments.
5. Despite this, Russia has engaged in a systematic propaganda and information manipulation campaign to support and justify its war of aggression and its actions which may amount to war crimes. Russia also aims at shifting the blame for the

global consequences of its full scale invasion and at destabilising the global security architecture to others.

6. Russian state led disinformation campaigns have disseminated misleading narratives including that of Neo Nazism and historical revision on a large scale because of Russia's capacity to control all media. There is also a growing number of initiatives collecting evidence of Russian war propaganda and information manipulation aiming at dehumanising the Ukrainian people and inciting acts of hatred and violence against them. Throughout its aggression against Ukraine, Russia has used disinformation, information manipulation and war propaganda to deny, justify or evade responsibility for its brutal attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure. There have been numerous incidents of TV and social media interventions openly calling for or celebrating attacks by the Russian forces.
7. Children and youth can be particularly affected by disinformation due to their vulnerability. There is growing evidence of a systematic exposure by Russian authorities of Ukrainian children to anti-Ukraine messaging and Russian indoctrination. At the same time, Russia has been using disinformation to justify its broadly documented abductions and forced transfers of Ukrainian children to its territory or to Belarus under false claims of child protection.
8. The upcoming International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November is also a reminder of how women are often targets of disinformation campaigns. Gender-based disinformation aims to silence their voice in public debates. Against this backdrop, our commitment to mainstream gender perspective in responding effectively to the disinformation-related security threats is ever more important.
9. On our side, we will continue to voice our steadfast support for Ukraine in its rightful self-defence and to refute Russia's propaganda and disinformation. For instance, examples of Russian activities are collected by the EUvsDisinfo project, raising awareness about coordinated and malign information manipulation and accessible to everyone. We underline the importance of ensuring a human rights-based and whole-of-society approach to proactively countering foreign information manipulation and disinformation.
10. More broadly, the EU and its Member States actively support the development of international principles and norms to address foreign information manipulation and

interference as well as disinformation, including by promoting responsible state behaviour in the online environment and state commitment to refrain from using the Internet to undermine human rights, universal values, security and democratic processes and institutions. We are ready to engage with all partners that are willing to engage in this endeavour.

11. We also welcome related OSCE initiatives, such as those prepared in the context of #SAIFE – Spotlight Initiatives on Artificial Intelligence and Freedom of Expression, or the recent ODIHR event on addressing online hate in the age of artificial intelligence.
12. Madame Chair, there is much more that can be said in reference to information integrity. Rapid technological development, notably the use of artificial intelligence (AI), is one of the topics that will have a profound impact on this field in the future. It is therefore crucial to support discussion on the use of AI in the military space, in appropriate forums.
13. Thank you again for allowing us to further contribute to these very important and necessary discussions.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, the Potential Candidate Country GEORGIA, the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, the members of the European Economic Area, as well as SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.