

Disinformation in enlargement countries: Sowing instability, distorting EU's perception

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CIDOB. Elisabets 12, 08001 Barcelona

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Disinformation has become a significant challenge for European societies and for the future of European enlargement in the Western Balkans and the Eastern Neighbourhood. AI-generated fake content, information manipulation or suppression, conspiracy theories, and anti-European narratives are being produced and spread by both internal actors and foreign powers with geopolitical interests in the region. This disinformation thrives on regional shocks, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as well as existing social, ethnic, and economic divisions within these countries.

This seminar is a mutual learning activity focused on identifying the factors driving disinformation in the Western Balkans and the Eastern Neighbourhood. It aims to explore more effective and democratic strategies to combat disinformation. The seminar seeks to connect researchers, journalists, civil society organizations and academia to share views and experiences.



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- 09.00 - 09.15 **Welcome and Goal of the Dialogue**
Carme Colomina, Senior Research Fellow, CIDOB
- 09.15 - 10.45 **The Eastern Neighbourhood: Russia's disinformation and internal challenges**
What has been the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on the spread of disinformation in the region? Who are the actors promoting disinformation? What internal factors contribute to feeding and fuelling these narratives? How can disinformation be challenged democratically while enhancing freedom of expression?
- Katarína Klingová**, Senior Research Fellow of the Centre for Democracy & Resilience at the GLOBSEC Policy Institute (*online*)
Elena Simanschi, Research Fellow, Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals, IBEI (*online*)
Yevhen Fedchenko, co-founder and editor-in-chief of StopFake.org, and director of the Mohyla School of Journalism, Ukraine
Eugene Kondratov, PhD Candidate, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Moderated by **Cèlia Cernadas**, journalist, Catalunya Ràdio

Followed by a debate between all the speakers and invited guests.

10.45 – 11.15 **Coffee break**

11.15 - 12.45 **The Western Balkans: disinformation's impact on democratization and enlargement**
What has been the impact of disinformation and anti-EU narratives on the enlargement process? What national, social, and ethnic divisions are exploited by internal and external actors to promote disinformation? How are competing geopolitical interests in the Western Balkans pushing their own narratives? How can countries in the region tackle disinformation while upholding press freedom and pluralistic views?

Oana Popescu, Director, Global Focus Center

Goran Georgiev, Senior Analyst, CSD (Center for Study of Democracy)

Adnan Ćerimagić, Senior Analyst for the Western Balkans, ESI (European Stability Initiative)

Moderated by **Carme Colomina**, Senior Research Fellow, CIDOB

Followed by a debate between all the speakers and invited guests.

12.45 – 13.00 **Conclusions and Final Remarks**
Javier Borràs, Researcher, CIDOB

13.00 – 14.30 **Light lunch**