



OPEN ACCESS

EDITED AND REVIEWED BY
Matthias Karmasin,
CMC- Institute for Comparative Media- and
Communication Studies (Austrian Academy of
Sciences/University of Klagenfurt), Austria

*CORRESPONDENCE
Rubén Rivas-de-Roca
✉ rubenrafael.rivasderoca@usc.es

RECEIVED 26 February 2025
ACCEPTED 27 February 2025
PUBLISHED 11 March 2025

CITATION
Rivas-de-Roca R, Pérez-Curiel C and
Rúas-Araújo J (2025) Editorial: The impact of
disinformation on European Public Institutions
and local or regional media: mapping
strategies for fact-checking.
Front. Commun. 10:1584102.
doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2025.1584102

COPYRIGHT
© 2025 Rivas-de-Roca, Pérez-Curiel and
Rúas-Araújo. This is an open-access article
distributed under the terms of the [Creative
Commons Attribution License \(CC BY\)](#). The
use, distribution or reproduction in other
forums is permitted, provided the original
author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are
credited and that the original publication in
this journal is cited, in accordance with
accepted academic practice. No use,
distribution or reproduction is permitted
which does not comply with these terms.

Editorial: The impact of disinformation on European Public Institutions and local or regional media: mapping strategies for fact-checking

Rubén Rivas-de-Roca^{1*}, Concha Pérez-Curiel² and
José Rúas-Araújo³

¹Department of Communication Sciences, University of Santiago de Compostela, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, ²Department of Journalism II, University of Seville, Seville, Spain, ³Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising, University of Vigo, Vigo, Spain

KEYWORDS

disinformation, fact-checking, democracy, media system, digital platform, cross-territorial

Editorial on the Research Topic

[The impact of disinformation on European Public Institutions and local or regional media: mapping strategies for fact-checking](#)

Digital communication has altered the relationship between political actors and the media, moving to a type of communication in which brief messages are prioritized (Garrido-Lora et al., 2022). In this scenario, some authors point to the emergence of dissonant public spheres fueled by disinformation (Pfetsch, 2023). Particularly, online disinformation poses a challenge to democracies (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2019) since it damages institutional trust and, therefore, the quality of democracy.

There is a growing academic concern over false information and their impact on the shaping of public opinion. Prior scholarship has shed light on the role of fact-checking as a solving practice (Westlund et al., 2024) or the impact of online disinformation on elections (Mauk and Grömping, 2024). Besides that, some local and regional European media outlets have developed media literacy projects to combat disinformation within their communities (Rúas-Araújo et al., 2023).

The literature has examined the working of disinformation on topics such as climate change (García Santamaría et al., 2024) or the influence of this phenomenon in several media landscapes (Bradshaw et al., 2020; Giglietto et al., 2023). However, scant attention has been devoted to institutional responses to disinformation. This Research aimed to fill this gap through five articles. They all have a shared interest in the challenges triggered by disinformation in a digital context.

First, in an article published in 2022, Fatema et al. conducted a quantitative analysis of the social media influence on the relationship between politicians and citizens, considering the moderating effect of political slogans. Based on a survey, the authors detected a positive and significant impact of social networks on politicians and citizens. The role of political slogans in the image building of political leaders is also highlighted. Hence, this contribution opens future avenues of research to study the positive relationships that politicians can make with the citizens.

Nevertheless, the use of digital technologies has also negative implications. As stated, disinformation is one of the main problems and this led Quintas-Froufe et al. to explore the corporate policies applied by TikTok to protect young audiences against disinformation. As the audience exposure to disinformation on social media is huge, the article develops a longitudinal analysis (2020–2024) of these policies, the topics they deal with and how they are monitored. The paper reveals the increasing role of institutional communication or transparency in the framework of the European Digital Services Act (DSA), but it is still early to make a full assessment of these initiatives.

Regarding the action of governments, Dragomir asks to what extent do governments fight or boost disinformation. Drawing upon a cross-country comparison analysis, the author unveils how laws and regulations against disinformation frequently curtail press freedom. This problem is bigger in authoritarian regimes or flawed democracies, but there is a worrying ripple effect of these practices. The line between instigators and regulators of disinformation is weak, threatening well-established democracies.

Following the above, disinformation is also disseminated by political actors as illustrated by Domínguez-García et al.. Their article focuses on interventions by members of the Congress of Deputies during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spain. It is outstanding that the issue of disinformation was a minor topic on the Spanish political agenda, even though the selected time frame was marked by polarization. Terms such as lie, false, and hoax were preferred over disinformation or post-truth. The authors also found how health and economic frames were highly mentioned due to the pandemic. According to their results, it seems that disinformation is used as another element in the framework of confrontational political rhetoric, without a proper discussion on the measures needed to tackle this information.

Lastly, Vázquez-Gestal et al. also address Spain, but with a focus on fact-checking practices as a solution. Specifically, they analyze the official YouTube channels of the health departments of all Spanish autonomous communities. The nature and strategies of videos are described, showing an increasing employment of YouTube to fight disinformation. Regional health authorities mostly resort to micro-videos in order to respond to fake news, specially aimed at patients. Messages against disinformation are produced both as a preventive measure or in response to existing contents.

The five contributions to this Research Topic offer renewed approaches to disinformation within different media systems and political cultures. The role of citizens, fact-checkers, political actors, or digital platforms is examined in the fight against this problem. As stated, digital technologies have a vast range of possibilities,

but the rise of disinformation requires counteractive strategies by public and private actors. On this matter, the importance of citizens or fact-checking initiatives should be acknowledged following a cross-territory perspective.

This set of articles portrays an increasing field of research that seeks to further our understanding of the flow of disinformation and how to shape counteractive initiatives with impact at the local level. Future research could expand the scope of these works by focusing on the adoption of innovative tools like AI or the success of agreements between institutions and digital platforms, which are starting to combat this phenomenon in Europe thanks to DSA.

Author contributions

RR-d-R: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization. CP-C: Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization, Supervision. JR-A: Funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing.

Funding

The author(s) declare that financial support was received for the research and/or publication of this article. This Research Topic was supported by the FAKELocal: Map of Disinformation in the Autonomous Communities and Local Entities of Spain and their Digital Ecosystem (Ref. PID2021-124293OB-I00), funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation, the State Research Agency (AEI) of the Government of Spain and by the ERDF of the European Union (EU).

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

References

- Bradshaw, S., Howard, P. N., Kollanyi, B., and Neudert, L. M. (2020). Sourcing and automation of political news and information over social media in the United States, 2016–2018. *Polit. Commun.* 37, 173–193. doi: 10.1080/10584609.2019.1663322
- García Santamaría, S., Cossarini, P., Campos-Domínguez, E., and Palau-Sampio, D. (2024). Unraveling the dynamics of climate disinformation. Understanding the role of vested interests, political actors, and technological amplification. *Observatorio (OBS*)* 18, 1–12 doi: 10.15847/obsOBS18520242605

- Garrido-Lora, M., Sánchez Decicco, W. N., and Rivas-de-Roca, R. (2022). Strategy and creativity in the use of political slogans: a study of the elections held in Spain in 2019. *Commun. Soc.* 35, 155–171. doi: 10.15581/003.35.3.155-171
- Giglietto, F., Marino, G., Mincigrucci, R., and Stanziano, A. (2023). A workflow to detect, monitor, and update lists of coordinated social media accounts across time: the case of the 2022 Italian Election. *Soc. Media Soc.* 9. doi: 10.1177/20563051231196866

Mauk, M., and Grömping, M. (2024). Online disinformation predicts inaccurate beliefs about election fairness among both winners and losers. *Comp. Polit. Stud.* 57, 965–998. doi: 10.1177/00104140231193008

Pfetsch, B. (2023). Conditions of campaigning in dissonant public spheres and crisis of democracy. *Polit. Commun.* 40, 346–350. doi: 10.1080/10584609.2023.2193554

Rúas-Araújo, J., Rodríguez-Martelo, T., and Fontenla-Pedreira, J. (2023). Disinformation and verification in a digital society: an analysis of strategies and policies applied in the european regional TV

broadcasters of the CIRCOM network. *Societies* 13:81. doi: 10.3390/soc13040081

Vázquez-Herrero, J., Vizoso, Á., and López-García, X. (2019). Innovación tecnológica y comunicativa para combatir la desinformación: 135 experiencias para un cambio de rumbo. *Prof. Inform.* 28:e280301. doi: 10.3145/epi.2019.may.01

Westlund, O., Belair-Gagnon, V., Graves, L., Larsen, R., and Steensen, S. (2024). What is the problem with misinformation? Fact-checking as a sociotechnical and problem-solving practice. *Journal. Stud.* 25, 898–918. doi: 10.1080/1461670X.2024.2357316