



# DISICON

INFORMATION INTEGRITY CONFERENCE

29 - 30 November, 2022

## DISICON 2022

### Understanding Citizens' Vulnerabilities to Disinformation: How Democracies Navigate the Online Information space?

29 - 30 November, 2022

Navigating the online information space has become increasingly complex for democracies, as they are faced with a range of challenges, including information disorders, foreign interference, and cybersecurity threats. These challenges have the potential to undermine the integrity of democratic processes and institutions, and can have a significant impact on the stability and security of any country, including Kosovo.

The National Democratic Institute's (NDI) DISICON 2022 conference, held November 29-30, 2022, addressed the issues of disinformation and foreign interference in the context of Kosovo's information integrity environment. The conference brought together experts from various fields, including technology, social media, journalism, and civil society, to analyze and understand the vulnerabilities of citizens to disinformation in the online information space. The overarching theme of the conference, "Understanding Citizens' Vulnerabilities to Disinformation: How Democracies Navigate the Online Information space?" highlighted the importance of analyzing the factors that contribute to citizens being susceptible to disinformation and foreign interference. This DISICON primarily focused on the launch of Kosovo's first Vulnerability Index of Disinformation in three key domains: Media Environment, Political Landscape and Public Perception. The key domains were assessed from the perspective of foreign malign influence in Kosovo, with Media Environment ranking as the most vulnerable.

DISICON's program also included workshops facilitated by META Facebook with students from public and private universities in Kosovo to address the importance of maintaining information integrity as means to support democracy. The workshops aimed to equip participants with new skills and tools on how to utilize the latest technological tools to ensure information integrity. During the two-day event, 110 guests participated in person, and 53 students attended the two-day workshops. This DISICON edition also had first time participants from NDI's Regional Information Integrity Forum joining in person from Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, representatives of academia and civil society from Taiwan, EU, and U.S. gave keynote addresses.

This fourth edition of DISICON is a testament to NDI's continued commitment to addressing this issue. Addressing information disorders requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach, which should include strategies for countering disinformation, strengthening democratic institutions and processes, and increasing regional cooperation to combat this phenomenon. This conference also reflects the growing concern of disinformation and foreign interference in democratic processes and the need to understand and mitigate them. The conference provided a valuable opportunity for experts to come together and analyze the issue of disinformation and to develop strategies for democratic societies to navigate the online information space more effectively.

## DISICON in the media

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The two-day conference reached more than 263,013 people, with more than 48,000 views on the livestreams and video posts. TV channels ATV, Klan Kosova, RTK1 and RTK2 covered the two-day conference with interviews live from the event. On Facebook, there were 46 posts/articles on DISICON, while on Twitter there were 31 posts related to it, with a total of 8215 interactions from Facebook, Twitter and news portals. Online news portals had 15 articles on DISICON. Social media posts and news articles were shared in the following countries: Kosovo, Albania, USA, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Taiwan, and Italy. NDI Kosovo live-streamed the conference on its Facebook page for both the first day and second day.

### Key takeaways:

- Implementing a holistic approach to countering anti-democratic foreign influences in the Western Balkans, which includes joint efforts to protect the integrity of information in Kosovo.
- Developing norms to make ownership of media transparent, including all business and political interests.
- Developing mechanisms and protocols to fight foreign influence in the information space in Kosovo.
- Collaboration and knowledge sharing among media practitioners, journalists, academic experts, NGO representatives, and government representatives to enhance information integrity.
- Increase awareness among political parties to develop norms and standards in combating disinformation, hate speech and sexist language.
- Develop mechanisms for cyber security and defense capabilities, in line with the European Union best standards and practices.
- The introduction of media literacy classes in schools and universities will provide students with skills to identify information disorders and contribute to greater individual resiliency to disinformation and foreign malign influence. Likewise, raising awareness on information disorders and tools to combat it among groups that are not enrolled in the education system is crucial for a comprehensive and inclusive institutional approach. Individual resiliency has the potential to positively shape the information and media space.
- The Vulnerability Index of Disinformation in Kosovo found that the Consolidation of the legal framework on cyber-security would pave the way for the establishment of sustainable institutional mechanisms to monitor and combat foreign malign influence, as well as the membership of Kosovo in NATO and the EU will enable Kosovo to strengthen institutional resiliency from foreign malign influence coming from Russia, China, Serbia and elsewhere. In response, measures should be implemented to counter the influence of foreign anti-democratic actors, specifically Russia, in the dissemination of disinformation in Western Balkans.
- Develop 5G strategies that protect privacy, human rights, and democracy.

- Expand the political Ad Library archive feature on Facebook to include information on all types of ads, not just political ads, to provide users with a more comprehensive understanding of the ads they see on the platform. Ads during election campaigns must be included.
- Cooperation and partnerships between the private sector, civil society, and government institutions and digital platforms will improve the resiliency of digital space from disinformation and foreign malign influence. In particular, these partnerships will serve as important identification mechanisms of information disorders, thus helping to prevent disinformation spread through monitoring and fact-checking.

**263,013**  
**TOTAL REACH**



**48,000**  
**VIEWS ON FACEBOOK**



**31**  
**POSTS ON DISICON**



**8215**  
**INTERACTIONS ON  
SOCIAL MEDIA**



**4**  
**TV CHANNELS  
COVERED THE EVENT**



**7**  
**COUNTRIES SHARED  
DISICON EVENT**



**110**  
**IN-PERSON  
PARTICIPANTS**



**53**  
**STUDENTS  
ATTENDED THE  
WORKSHOPS**



**15**  
**NEWS ARTICLES**

## Opening Remarks

### Ambassador Nancy Soderberg, Senior Resident Country Director, NDI Kosovo



Ambassador Nancy Soderberg, Senior Resident Country Director of NDI Kosovo, opened the conference. She highlighted the significance of the launch of the first Vulnerability Index of Disinformation in Kosovo. Ambassador Soderberg emphasized the need for a holistic approach in countering anti-democratic foreign influences from outside the Western Balkans. She remarked that it is essential to secure the information space and protect the integrity of information. She highlighted the importance of having representatives of academia, civil society and relevant stakeholders coming from the region, including Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina. NDI's own assessment of Kosovo's media landscape showed that business and political interests are prevalent in disinformation campaigns and are enabled by the lack of transparency and media ownership, and lack of mechanisms and protocols to fight foreign influence in the information space. Citizens are, therefore, vulnerable to false narratives accessing in daily information. Soderberg highlighted how we must work together, share best practices, and address this common challenge throughout the Western Balkans.

Ambassador Soderberg closed her opening speech by quoting last year's keynote address Christiane Amanpour: *"Democracies work best when we have strong journalism."*

#### Key takeaways:

- The importance of implementing a holistic approach to countering anti-democratic foreign influences in the Western Balkans, including ongoing efforts to secure the information space and protect the integrity of information.
- Addressing the issue of business and political interests prevalent in disinformation campaigns by implementing transparency and media ownership, as well as developing mechanisms and protocols to fight foreign influence in the information space.

## Opening Remarks

### Alyson Grunder, Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy, Kosovo



Ms. Alyson Grunder emphasized the significance of DISICON in fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing among media practitioners, journalists, academic experts, NGO representatives, and government representatives in the fight against disinformation. Grunder emphasized how important these platforms are to bring together a diverse group of actors to address the common challenges and potential solutions associated with disinformation. Grunder recognized that combating disinformation requires a global effort, and underscored the importance of including perspectives from Kosovo, the Western Balkans, Europe, Taiwan and the US. Furthermore, Grunder highlighted the ongoing foreign malign activity in the Western Balkans and how disinformation plays a role in escalating political tensions. Grunder emphasized that the connections established at the DISICON conference are vital in identifying and combating disinformation in Kosovo and throughout the Western Balkans.

#### Key takeaways:

- Empowering citizens, particularly young people, to play a critical role in countering disinformation is key, especially by providing them with the necessary tools to identify and verify the authenticity of information, particularly as they consume a significant amount of information online.
- Collaboration and knowledge sharing among media practitioners, journalists, academic experts, NGO representatives, and government representatives is essential in the fight against disinformation in promoting information integrity.

## Keynote Address

### Donna Brazile, Board member of the National Democratic Institute and Former Interim Chair of the Democratic National Committee



*"Disinformation is a weapon for populism."*

Donna Brazile addressed the DISICON as a keynote address. Brazile highlighted the negative effects of disinformation on people's beliefs and democratic outcomes, including amplifying voter confusion, inciting hate, and suppressing political participation among marginalized groups. Brazile noted her experience in 2016 when she witnessed Russian hacking in the American electoral process as chair of the Democratic National Committee. She contrasted her prior relatively easy role as the interim chair in 2012 with the difficulty in that role in 2016. She quoted her book "Hacks:" "Politics has never been considered a clean sport, but in 2016, it marked a new low. The DNC, a political party, dedicated to defend the free and fair elections, was attacked by the Russians, while the Republican nominee for President openly encouraged it. This was not a Hollywood movie about world spies and super agents. This was real-life and it had real consequences."

Brazile emphasized that the development of communication technologies is bringing a new era of communications and it will rapidly change the media landscape. The anti-democratic movements and narratives do not pose a threat only to the United States but also the world. Citing NDI Kosovo assessments which showed that, throughout the Western Balkans, domestic and foreign actors aim to exploit divisions in societies and undermine democracies, she highlighted that disinformation is a weapon for populism and authoritarianism aimed at undermining confidence in democratic electoral processes.



### Key takeaways:

- Increase education and awareness about cyber security to promote resilience against cyber threats.
- Increase awareness among political parties to develop norms and standards in combating disinformation, hate speech and sexist language.
- Develop mechanisms for cyber security and defense capabilities in line with the EU's best standards and practices.

## DISISTORY

### Kateryna Kruk, Central and Eastern Europe Public Policy Manager at META, Poland



Kateryna Kruk shared her experience working with META, one of the leading social media companies, and emphasized the importance of fact-checking in her daily work. She noted that the platform has around three billion active users, which is an enormous responsibility when it comes to controlling and managing the spread of disinformation, hate speech and other harmful intent. Kruk highlighted the importance of social media platforms in not only sharing information but also in having responsibilities in reducing, removing and reporting information disorders. She further explained that when she first joined the company, she realized that while there are many capable and smart people working to make the platform as safe and secure as possible for people to stay connected, there are still limitations as to how far private companies can go. Additionally, Kruk highlighted that there is cooperation across sectors (NGO, technological companies, and the government) and that META understands the role of cross-sector cooperation in fighting disinformation.

## Presentation: Vulnerability Index of Disinformation in Kosovo

Albana Rexha, Senior Policy Analyst, Democracy Plus



Disinformation is a major threat to Kosovo's democracy and national security. Foreign malign influence, lack of media literacy, and polarization of political events and elections weaken citizens' access to information, undermining their ability to make informed decisions. To better understand the threats to information integrity in Kosovo, NDI, with the support of USAID, supported Democracy Plus in creating the first Vulnerability Index of Disinformation in Kosovo. This research assessed the state of Kosovo's vulnerability to information disorders on a measurable scale. The Index provides an overall assessment of the state of play and mapped the key factors involved, while providing a comprehensive baseline assessment of the vulnerability level.

The Vulnerability Index of Disinformation in Kosovo was launched on the first day of the DISICON Conference. Albana Rexha, Senior Policy Analyst in Democracy Plus, presented main findings in the three key domains assessed by the Index: Media Environment, Political Landscape, and Public Perceptions. The key domains were assessed from the perspective of foreign malign influence in Kosovo. The Index reveals that the Media Environment is vulnerable to disinformation and foreign malign influence, scoring 46/100. This domain, being the most vulnerable among the three Index domains, captures the prevalence and availability of disinformation in Kosovar media, the capacity of institutions to manage disinformation including media and the role of Facebook, and public resiliency to misinformation and disinformation.

The Vulnerability Index of Disinformation revealed that Kosovo is vulnerable to disinformation and foreign malign influence on a scale of 41 out of 100. The Index found that Kosovo's Media Environment and Political Landscape are more vulnerable to disinformation and foreign malign influence than the public perception domain. The Media Environment is vulnerable, with a ranking of 46 out of 100; Political Landscape is vulnerable with a ranking of 45 out of 100; Public Perception is less vulnerable with a ranking of 32 out of 100. In the coming years, the Index will be expanded to include other domains that are or can be vulnerable to disinformation. For more information please visit the Vulnerability Index of Disinformation in Kosovo published by the Democracy Plus.

### Findings of the report:

- Membership of Kosovo in NATO and the EU will enable Kosovo to strengthen institutional resiliency from foreign malign influence coming from Russia, China, Serbia and elsewhere.
- The introduction of media literacy classes in schools and universities will provide students with skills to identify information disorders and contribute to greater individual resiliency to disinformation and foreign malign influence. Likewise, raising awareness on information disorders and tools to combat it among groups that are not enrolled in the education system is crucial for a comprehensive and inclusive institutional approach. Individual resiliency has the potential to positively shape the information and media space.
- Consolidation of the legal framework on cyber-security would pave the way for the establishment of sustainable institutional mechanisms to monitor and combat foreign malign influence.
- Strengthening the capacities of the self-regulatory body of online media - Press Council in Kosovo - would help address on a more timely basis all the complaints received and to conduct proactive monitoring of online media. The latter serves as a safeguarding mechanism in terms of prevention of the spread of disinformation.
- Cooperation and partnerships between the private sector, civil society, and government institutions and digital platforms will improve the resiliency of digital space from disinformation and foreign malign influence. In particular, these partnerships will serve as important identification mechanisms of information disorders, thus helping to prevent disinformation spread through monitoring and fact-checking.
- Information integrity in Kosovo would benefit from civil society organizations' expansion of their work to improve citizens' critical thinking, especially with the youth. Their cooperation with the media to improve journalists' fact-checking capacities is also important.

## Panel discussion:

### How vulnerable is Kosovo?



This panel discussion examined the complex relationship between public perception, media environment and political environment in relation to disinformation and foreign interference, with a particular emphasis on the findings of the Vulnerability Index of Disinformation in Kosovo. The panelists, who represented a range of perspectives and expertise, provided critical analysis on the current state of disinformation in Kosovo and the challenges in combating it.

One of the key points raised during the discussion was the outdated nature of the law regulating the Independent Media Commission (IMC) which oversees audio and audio-visual content in Kosovo. This, coupled with challenges on online media, was identified as a significant problem that contributed to the spread of disinformation. Another important issue that was discussed was the role of the foreign actors, specifically Russia, in the dissemination of disinformation and the intimidation of critical voices in Kosovo. This was seen as a clear attempt to undermine the stability and security of the country.

Additionally, the panelists provided comparative analysis of the situation in Kosovo in relation to other countries in the region, with some noting that, while Kosovo is vulnerable to disinformation, the situation is better in comparison to Serbia, noting that Kosovo is comparable to North Macedonia and Montenegro.

Moreover, the panelists discussed the prevalence of disinformation among the Serbian community living in Kosovo, and how it serves to ignite inter-ethnic tensions. They also noted that the media is not solely to blame. They also stated the Press Council is trusted to address complaints for online content. Overall, the panel discussion provided a nuanced and in-depth analysis of the complex and multifaceted nature of disinformation in Kosovo, and the various factors that contribute to its spread.

**Key takeaways:**

- Update the law regulating the Independent Media Commission in order to address the spread of information disorders and implementation of EU directives on media environment.
- Implement measures to counter the influence of foreign anti-democratic actors, specifically Russia, in the dissemination of disinformation in Western Balkans.
- Increase public awareness and education on information disorders and its potential impact on democratic outcomes, particularly among marginalized groups.
- Develop effective mechanisms for addressing complaints and holding media outlets accountable for the spread of disinformation, such as utilizing the Press Council as a trustworthy body to address complaints for online media.

**DISISTORY**

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**Nora Xhuzi, Journalist at Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK)**



Ms. Xhuzi shared her experience and challenges of working as a journalist in an environment dominated mostly by men. She also shared that in decision-making rooms, women were more constrained in sharing their opinions on how to move forward with certain articles or TV stories, and having more women chief editors would help young women journalists to seek and continue pursuing this difficult yet rewarding job. Xhuzi shared the importance of fact-checking and critical thinking when consuming daily news in Kosovo, as she has seen firsthand how important it is for citizens to be informed accurately in order for them to make well-informed decisions.

## Presentation - Vulnerability Index in Western Balkans countries

**Katarina Klingova, Senior Research Fellow, Center for Democracy and Resilience, GLOBSEC, Slovakia**



The GLOBSEC Vulnerability Index measures vulnerability towards foreign influence in eight countries: Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia on a 0-100 scale, where 0 is the most resilient and 100 the most vulnerable. Katerina Klingova, a Senior Researcher Fellow at GLOBSEC, presented a comprehensive analysis of the GLOBSEC Vulnerability Index which aimed to evaluate the susceptibility of these countries in five key dimensions: public attitudes, political landscape, public administration, information landscape, and civic and academic spaces, with a particular focus directed towards the Kremlin's and Beijing's activities. The Index is based on an in-depth examination of these dimensions that are considered to be crucial in determining a country's vulnerability to foreign influence. The Index provides a comprehensive and nuanced view of the vulnerability of these eight countries to foreign influence. Together with the Vulnerability Index of Disinformation in Kosovo, these two Indexes provided a comparison between all six Western Balkans countries, providing a clearer picture of the susceptibilities in the Western Balkans. For more information please visit the GLOBSEC publication.

### Key takeaways:

- Membership in international structures (the EU and NATO), contributes to a greater resilience from the perspective of common policy solutions, centres of excellence and collective defence, but differences in the quality of public administration, legislation or the protection of electoral integrity contribute to vulnerabilities of respective countries.
- Mindsets matter often more than tangible structures such as institutions, administrative capacities and hard resources. And mindsets are shaped by the information space which is a delicate construct in all democracies, not to mention the still immature political systems of Central Europe and Western Balkans.

- Kremlin's influence, activities and the debate about them is more prevalent in the region than the one about the growing presence of Beijing's interests, which represents both an opportunity for proactive measures and communication, as well as potential vulnerability if the information vacuum is utilized by China first. Russia is far from a new player in the region. It is thus understood better whereas China is an enigma potentially able to disrupt the political and civic systems in the region.
- Foreign malign activities constitute both a symptom and a cause of the weakness of the analyzed countries. Were China or Russia not present in the region, these states would still be grappling with corruption, state capture or erosion of media freedom. Foreign actions, even if they exploit the weaknesses, should not be understood as an explanation of all the deficiencies the countries in question have.

## WORKSHOP 1

**Kateryna Kruk, Central and Eastern Europe Public Policy Manager at META. This workshop was facilitated by Faik Ispahiu, Executive Director, Internews Kosova**



The workshop centered on the approach META has taken to disseminate disinformation on all of its platforms, including Facebook. Kruk examined how the majority of content online is not necessarily intended to cause harm and that human eyes are needed to check this information. Kruk highlighted that the response of META has been in reducing, removing, and reporting information disorders. However, there is still an ongoing debate whether the accounts which spread disinformation should be penalized permanently from the platform. During this workshop, Kruk mentioned the collaboration with different fact-checking organizations in the world to help ensure that the information spread on these platforms is true, confirmed and does not contain hate-speech, sexist language or other harmful content. She shared five ways in which META is helping to prevent the dissemination of false content in this platform:

- **Fact-checking:** Facebook partners with third-party fact-checking organizations to identify and review false or misleading content. Content that is found to be false is less likely to be shown in people's feed.
- **Removing accounts that repeatedly share false information:** Facebook removes accounts and posts that are found to be repeatedly sharing false information, in order to reduce the spread of disinformation.
- **Machine learning:** Facebook uses machine learning algorithms to identify and reduce the distribution of false content on the platform.
- **Providing transparency:** Facebook provides information about the pages and groups that are spreading false information.
- **Working with external partners:** Facebook works with external partners, including governments, media organizations, and academics, to better understand and combat disinformation.



## Opening remarks:

### Ambassador Nancy Soderberg, Senior Resident Country Director NDI Kosovo



Ambassador Nancy Soderberg, Senior Resident Country Director NDI Kosovo kicked off the second day of the conference by thanking USAID for its support. She then emphasized the importance of fighting disinformation by fostering collaboration and cooperation among Western Balkan countries, a growing threat in today's digital age. Ambassador Soderberg highlighted the importance of DISICON as a platform for participants to share their experiences, challenges and best practices in addressing disinformation and information manipulation. She discussed the risks and challenges posed by the evolving technology, the developments of new generations of information and communications and the implications of those developments on the fundamentals of democracy. She noted that DISICON is a timely initiative to enhance the resilience of democratic societies against information disorders.

#### Key takeaways:

- Bringing together participants from the region to discuss strategies for protecting democracies from disinformation and information manipulation.
- Recognizing the threats of a new generation of technologies to democracies.

## Opening remarks:

### Ambassador Shih-chung Liu Taipei Representative Office in Budapest, Hungary



Ambassador Shih-chung Liu in his opening remarks emphasized the threat of disinformation warfare from Russia and China, which has become more sophisticated and hybrid in nature. Ambassador Liu highlighted the need for cooperation in maintaining the integrity of information and the importance of media literacy and fact-checking in this regard. In order to counter disinformation and foreign influence, it is crucial to build national citizens' resilience. He also pointed out that, especially in the wake of COVID-19, it is important to work together to tackle the malign forces, by highlighting the growing concern of disinformation as a security threat and the importance of collective action and citizens' engagement to counter it.

#### Key takeaways:

- The threat of disinformation warfare from Russia and China has become more sophisticated and complex, requiring a coordinated and collaborative approach to address it.
- Media literacy and fact-checking are crucial to maintaining the integrity of information. Building national and citizen resilience is necessary to counter disinformation and foreign influence. It is important to work together and engage citizens in tackling this threat.

## Discussion

**Viola Von Cramon, Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, Member of the European Parliament. Discussion was facilitated by Pranvera Lipovica, Program Director NDI Kosovo**



Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, Member of the European Parliament, in her keynote address discussed the importance of the European Parliament's Special Committee in addressing disinformation and foreign interference. She emphasized that such activities aim to undermine fundamental rights, the legitimacy of public authorities, and deepen political and social fragmentation, in some cases causing harm to EU citizens. Von-Cramon specifically highlighted the challenge of Kremlin propaganda being spread through outlets such as Sputnik and Russia Today in Serbia. Von-Cramon outlined measures that the EU is taking to address disinformation, including the need to strengthen StratCom and improve cooperation and coordination among EU member states, regulating of party financing, development of a strategy for media literacy that involves relevant actors, and detection and understanding of networks of foreign malign actors. For Kosovo, Ms. Cramon called for financial transparency in the media landscape, more investigative journalism, and more fact checkers. Von-Cramon also highlighted the EU's concern about disinformation and malign foreign interference and the need for a comprehensive approach to address these threats.

Von-Cramon centered her discussion on how disinformation and anti-democratic foreign interference have become major concerns over the last few years, and how the growing disinformation campaigns have the potential to undermine the integrity of democratic processes and institutions. She noted they can have a significant impact on the stability and security of Kosovo, creating confusion and mistrust among citizens. Foreign actors may use various methods, including cyberattacks to interfere in the internal politics of a country. This can include efforts to influence elections, support certain political candidates or parties, or promote anti-democratic ideologies.

### Key takeaways:

- Strengthen StratCom and improve cooperation and coordination among EU member states to address disinformation and foreign interference.
- Develop a national strategy that involves relevant actors with the aim to understand networks of foreign malign actors to address disinformation and foreign interference.

### Presentation: Information War: Taiwan against disinformation

**Puma Shen, Associate Professor at the National Taipei University in Taiwan**



Puma Shen presented a comprehensive analysis of Taiwan's perspective on information warfare. The presentation offered examples from Taiwan and provided a detailed examination of the challenges related to transparency of sources and disinformation. Shen emphasized the negative impact of disinformation on the country's security and stability. This presentation provided a critical understanding of the specific challenges that Taiwan faces in relation to information warfare. It highlighted the importance of transparency of sources as a crucial aspect of counteracting disinformation and the need for effective strategies to mitigate its impact and disinformation circulation. Furthermore, it demonstrated Taiwan's concern and proactive approach towards tackling this issue of information warfare, which is a threat to not only Taiwan but also other countries.

### Key takeaways:

- Increase transparency of sources through measures such as requiring media outlets to disclose funding sources and ownership and promoting media literacy among citizens.
- Develop effective strategies to counter disinformation, such as investing in fact-checking and verification, and promoting media diversity to counter the spread of disinformation.

## DISISTORY

### Shkelzen Osmani, Hibrid.info



Shkelzen Osmani shared his experience in debunking information disorders online. With the rapid growth of internet penetration in Kosovo, the efforts in combating mis/disinformation are also expanding. Osmani emphasized the importance of fact-checking and verification in debunking information, as well as the need for collaboration between media outlets, civil society, and government institutions to effectively combat disinformation. He concluded by highlighting the importance of building a strong network of fact-checkers and verification experts to quickly and effectively debunk disinformation.

### Panel discussion:

#### 5G and the communication transformation



The panel discussion on 5G technology provided valuable insights into opportunities and challenges associated with the development of a new generation of technology communication. The participants, who represented various stakeholders from Taiwan, North Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia, discussed the implications of 5G for information manipulation, digital rights, and digital security.

One of the key points that emerged from the discussion was the need for careful regulations and precautions in the use of 5G technology, particularly in relation to critical infrastructure. With China having a leading market advantage in the technical development of 5G, it is essential to take steps to protect against potential security risks and malicious actors. This included initiatives such as the “Clean network” program, which aims to safeguard the integrity of global communications networks and prevent foreign adversaries from using these networks for espionage or other malicious activities.

Another key takeaway from the panel was the importance of regional cooperation in building resilience against the potential challenges presented by 5G technology. With its ability to support a wide range of new applications and services, 5G has the potential to bring significant benefits to society, but it also poses new security risks. The introduction of 5G has created some cybersecurity risks, notes the U.S. Department of Homeland and Security. One fear is malicious software and hardware being introduced into the 5G supply chain. Plus, 5G uses more information than previous technologies, which leaves more room for error. However, it was noted that by working together, countries can share knowledge, resources, and best practices to mitigate these risks and ensure that the benefits of 5G are shared by all.

The panel also emphasized the need for security protocols to address the new risks presented by 5G technology. This includes measures to prevent mass surveillance and protect citizens’ privacy and human rights, as well as oversight mechanisms to ensure that the use of 5G technology is consistent with these values.

In addition, the panel highlighted the importance of digital inclusion, ensuring that everyone can benefit from the opportunities presented by future technologies such as 5G. This includes policies to ensure that rural and remote communities have access to high-speed internet and other digital services, as well as measures to protect citizens from potential harms, such as digital divide, digital poverty, and digital illiteracy. The panel also emphasized the need for policies to protect countries from cyber attacks and to ensure the integrity and security of their networks.

#### Key takeaways:

- Foster regional cooperation and collaboration to build resilience against the challenges that come with the integration of future technologies such as 5G.
- Prioritize digital inclusion in the roll-out of 5G technology to ensure that all citizens, regardless of location or socio-economic status, have access to the benefits that it brings, but are also aware of the threats.

## 5G and the Future of Internet: Implications for Developing Democracies and Human Rights

**Moira Whelan, Director for Democracy and Technology, NDI  
Washington D.C**

**Blerim Rexha, University Professor, Faculty of Electrical and  
Computer Engineering, University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina,"  
Kosovo**



The presentation by Moira Whelan focused on NDI's report "5G and the Future of Internet: Implications for Developing Democracies and Human Rights" and emphasized the need for countries, legislators, and civil society to have access to current internet technologies and to collaborate with governments and companies to create solutions for democratic internet. The findings of the report show that 5G is a new and advanced mobile technology that is expected to bring significant improvements to connectivity, data flow, and machine-to-machine communication. It is anticipated to be a major leap forward for AI and smart cities. 5G is expected to drive global growth and its economic effects will be realized by 2035. The discussion with Blerim Rexha involved Kosovo's digital agenda, specifically the amendment of the law on electronic services and the need to focus on critical infrastructure and education of the population for the future technologies, specifically 5G.

### Key takeaways:

- Develop 5G strategies that protect privacy, human rights, and democracy.
- Engage the public, companies, government, and global entities on 5G to understand the players involved in the rollout of the 5G infrastructure and how they interact with democratic actors.
- Update the law on cybersecurity in line with the latest technological developments.

## DISISTORY

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### **Chia-You Kuo, President of the Taiwan Digital Diplomacy Association, Taiwan**



Chia-You Kuo shared her experience in advocating for standardization of Kosovo's online domain. She highlighted that the power of digital content lies in connecting people who share the same values. Kuo emphasized the importance of building a strong digital identity for Kosovo in order to establish a credible online presence and attract investment in the technology sector. Kuo emphasized the importance of taking a proactive approach to shaping Kosovo's digital future and ensuring that it aligns with democratic values.

## WORKSHOP: META tools of transparency

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### **Oskar Braszczyński, Government & Social Impact Partner Manager at META for Central & Eastern Europe, Poland**



Oskar Braszczyński conducted the workshop on the various tools of transparency that META employees use to ensure safety for its users, including the Ad Library which provides transparency by offering a collection of all ads currently running on META technologies and which was recently enabled for Kosovo Facebook users.



This tool allows users to view information about the ad, including the ad's creative, targeting, and spend, as well as information about the advertiser. Additionally, Facebook has implemented a political ad archive which allows users to view information about political ads, such as who paid for the ad and the targeting demographics. The platform also offers a feature called 'View Ads' which allows users to see all the ads a page is running on Facebook, Instagram, and Facebook's partner networks. These tools aim to increase transparency and accountability on the platform, and to help users understand the ads they see.

#### Key takeaways:

- Implement the Ad Library tool for all users on the platform, to increase transparency and accountability for all users.
- Expand the political ad archive feature to include information on all types of ads, not just political ads, to provide users with a more comprehensive understanding of the ads they see on the platform. Including targeting ads during election campaigns.



*The Information Integrity Conference "DISICON 2022" was organized by NDI Kosovo, in partnership with local and regional partners that are working in the field of information integrity. The conference and this summary and were made possible through the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). DISICON 2022 was also made possible in partnership with Democracy Plus, GLOBSEC, and the Taiwan Representative Office in Budapest. The opinions expressed herein are those of the speakers and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID, NDI, the United States Government, or any of the aforementioned organizations. Copyright © National Democratic Institute 2022. All rights reserved. Portions of this work may be reproduced and/or translated for non-commercial purposes provided NDI is acknowledged as the source of the material and is provided copies of any translation.*



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