



Elections 24 Check

Final Report

a project by



European Fact-Checking
Standards Network

with support from



Elections24Check

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Summary

The Elections24Check project, backed by the Google News Initiative, is a pioneering effort to tackle misinformation and disinformation around the 2024 European Elections. It has created a first-of-its-kind database to collect articles, fact-checks, debunks, and narrative reports authored by 46 EFCSN member organizations in a harmonized way, using 34 languages and coming from 36 countries. The project's aim is to enhance the effectiveness and situational awareness of fact-checkers throughout the election period and beyond, give stakeholders and researchers valuable insights about misinformation circulating in Europe, and offer the European public access to verified, fact-checked information.

As the European Elections have concluded, the impact of Elections24Check is clear. **The project met its ambitious goals and established a new standard for this collaboration between fact-checking organizations, significantly impacting the European community.**



Carlos Hernández-Echevarría, Chair of the EFCSN, discussed fact-checking activities, including the Elections24Check project, which focuses on protecting the integrity of European elections. He presented at the world's largest fact-checking conference, GlobalFact, in Sarajevo.

The database amassed an impressive [collection](#) of **3,171 articles**, with an average of **65 articles contributed per organization over 181 days**. To support these efforts, the project created a sophisticated [backend and frontend](#) for the elections24.efcsn.com website and a backoffice system. These tools assisted fact-checkers across Europe with core activities like **monitoring and contextual research**. They used **AI-generated narrative detection** to offer more detailed insights into trends in electoral disinformation. Throughout the project, 48 [narrative reports](#) have been created based on data from the platform, covering topics such as migrants, climate change, EU politics, FIMI, propaganda, and many others. We received 43 [research applications](#) to study disinformation in detail, including understanding coordinated inauthentic behaviours, improving fact-checking impact, and understanding disinformation's linguistic and semantic structure. The technical support team has successfully resolved 65 tickets, ensuring smooth operation plus achieving a [satisfaction rate of 89% from the fact-checkers](#) who found the project helpful in their day-to-day operations.

The [project's visibility](#) has been significant, with over **73 press article mentions** and considerable social media activity. Additionally, it has been mentioned by the Vice President of the European Commission and featured in conference panels, workshops, and policy discussions, showcasing its influence on European electoral integrity. Overall, the Elections24Check project has made substantial strides in fostering **cross-country collaboration** and providing verified information, playing a crucial role in preparing for the last European elections.

The project was ambitious for the European fact-checking community. It served as a pilot to test numerous hypotheses and ideas, provided valuable [learnings](#), and paved the way for potential innovation in [future](#) initiatives. **The EFC SN stands ready to engage with stakeholders to provide useful data for the fight against dis- and misinformation.**

KPIs

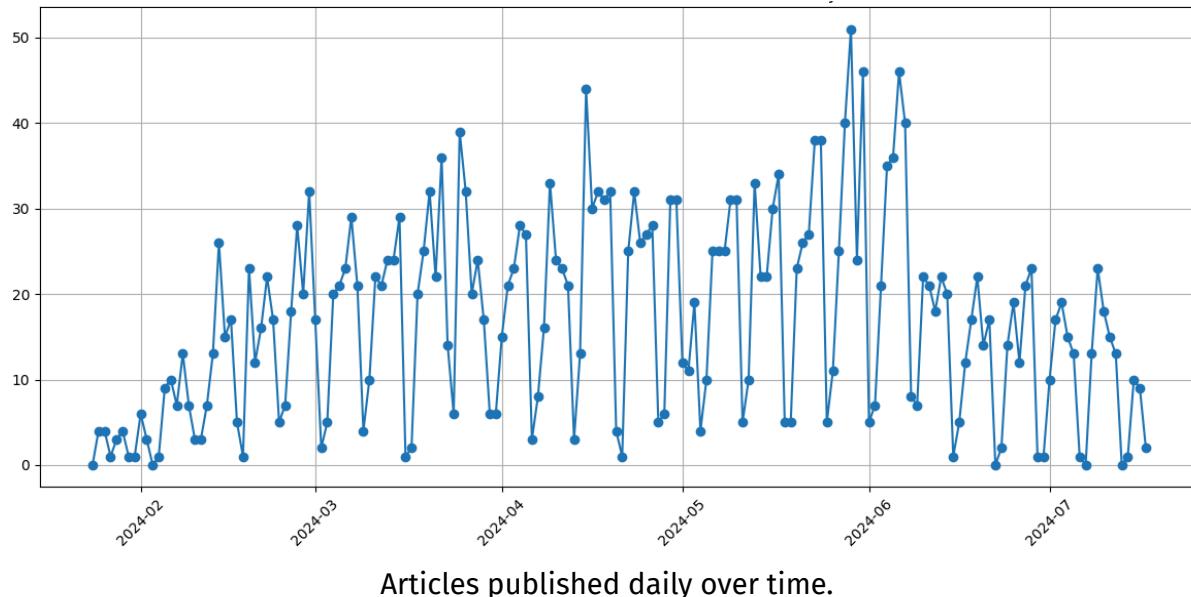
Description	Current	Planned at project end	Status
Number of articles ingested into the database	3,171	1,590	Fulfilled ▾
The average number of articles ingested into the database per organization	65.4	30	Fulfilled ▾
Fact-checking organizations ingesting data	46	40+	Fulfilled ▾
Languages covered	34	20+	Fulfilled ▾
Countries covered	36	n.a.	n.a. ▾
Narrative reports published	48	5-50	Fulfilled ▾
Applications for researcher access	43	20+	Fulfilled ▾
Technical support tickets completed	65	n.a.	n.a. ▾
Satisfaction of participating members with the project (measured in feedback survey)	89%	n.a.	n.a. ▾
Number of press articles featuring the project	73	50+	Fulfilled ▾

Database

The Elections24Check project database stands as a testament to the richness and diversity of the data collected throughout the project.

The database comprises 3,171 items, reflecting the extensive efforts of 46 fact-checking organizations from 36 countries. The articles were published daily over time, with a clear trend of increasing contributions as the election approached. The graph showcasing "*Articles published daily over time*" highlights the dynamic nature of the project, with peaks correlating to key events in the election cycle. **This timeline illustrates**

fact-checkers' responsiveness to real-time events and their capacity to adapt quickly to the evolving disinformation landscape.

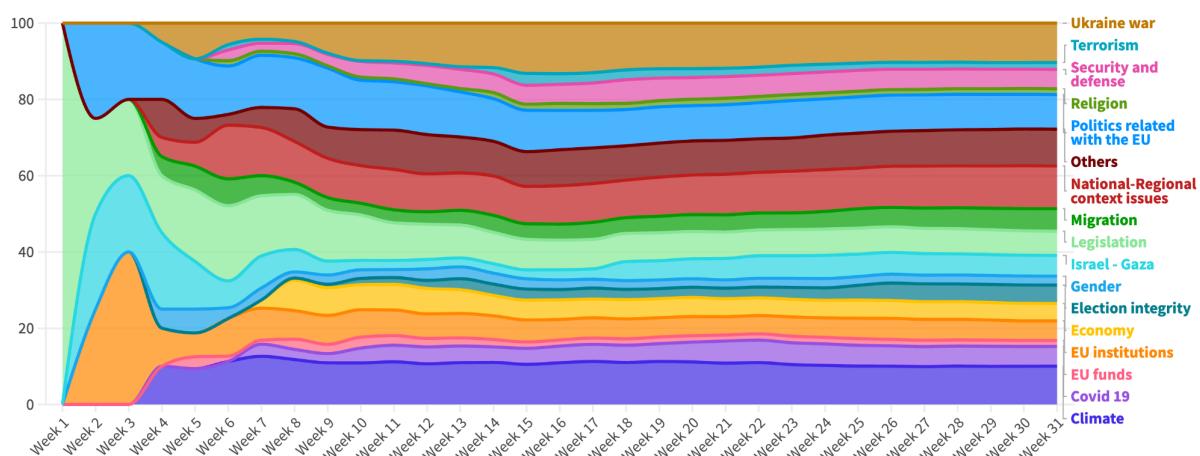


The keyword cloud visualizes the broad scope of topics covered, underscoring the diversity and relevance of the dataset. The prominent keywords such as "European Union," "Ukraine," "Climate change," and "Vaccine" reveal the most common issues addressed by the fact-checkers. **Including a wide range of topics, from "Agriculture" to "Terrorism," demonstrates the database capability to capture the multifaceted nature of misinformation across different domains and regions.**



The keyword cloud highlights the broad scope of topics relevant to the European discussion.

The database uniqueness is further highlighted by its detailed topic coverage over time, as seen in the area graph. This visualization reveals the distribution of 19 predefined topics, such as "Ukraine war," "Terrorism," "Migration," and "EU Institutions," showing how the focus of disinformation topics (Ukraine war, Climate and National-Regional Context Issues) remained quite stable throughout the election period.



Topic coverage over time.

The steady increase in articles containing claims appearances is a crucial indicator of the project's effectiveness in capturing and archiving key disinformation narratives. **A significant 82% of articles in the database contain at least one claim appearance, with 62% of those articles having the claim appearances archived.** This high percentage reflects the database adherence to rigorous standards in data collection, ensuring that the information is not only comprehensive but also reliable and easily accessible for future research. While it is an excellent start in this innovative project, 62% could and should be improved in future database iterations in order to preserve crucial evidence of disinformation.

The Elections24Check database represents a marked improvement over traditional claim review schemas. Unlike previous systems, this database integrates a broader range of data, encompassing various formats and languages, which enhances its utility for both fact-checkers and researchers. The database design allows for multiple claim appearances per article's claim, offering a more detailed understanding of complex disinformation efforts. Moreover, the integration of advanced search functionalities, narrative analysis, and real-time data synchronization ensures that users can quickly and effectively access the information they need.

In conclusion, the database created by the Elections24Check project is a unique and invaluable tool that offers deep insights into the disinformation landscape across Europe. Its rich dataset, combined with advanced technological features, sets a new standard for fact-checking initiatives and provides a robust foundation for future research and analysis.

Communication

Our communications for the Elections24Check project have received significant attention, with **over 73 press mentions**.

Vice President of the European Commission, **Věra Jourová**, said she knew the Elections24Check database and used it frequently.

The Directorate General for Communication of the **European Parliament** pointed journalists from 27 EU Member States to the database as part of their pre-election briefings.

EP Deputy Spokesperson Delphine Colard recommended the database [on X](#).

Rebekka Müller, **Candidate for the EP for Volt** Germany, [highlighted the database](#) in an Instagram reel.

The Elections24Check database was prominently featured in a dedicated module on [prebunking.withgoogle.com/eu-prebunking](#). Additionally, the database is cited frequently as a source in EDMO's [Disinfo Bulletin newsletter](#).

EFCN representatives highlighted the database in several forums, including the **DSA Tabletop Exercise** in Brussels on April 24, 2024, and presented findings at the seventh plenary meeting of the **Code of Practice's permanent task force on the 2024 EP elections**.

Panellists at the **EDMO Annual Conference** referred to the database several times, and the project team presented the project's progress at the EDMO International fact-checking conference on May 17, 2024.

The database has been distributed as a resource within the internal communications of several prominent organizations, including [Deutsche Welle's](#) fact-checking department, the [Global Investigative Journalism Network](#), the [European Data Journalism Network](#), and [Impress](#).

Elections24Check was presented at the **GlobalFact conference**, the biggest fact-checking conference. Elections24Check was mentioned repeatedly during panels, and two separate workshops focused on it.

Elections24Check was also showcased at the **POINT Conference** during the panel titled "EU Elections—What Happened and Why." More details can be found [here](#).

El País, one of the most prominent Spanish media outlets, [wrote](#) the following about Elections24Check:

“Offering a comprehensive ‘live’ diary of misinformation circulating in Europe, this tool helps citizens identify and understand false narratives, ranging from manipulated images of public figures to fabricated news stories about political events. It underscores the necessity for coordinated efforts to address the transnational nature of digital disinformation campaigns.”

The EFCSN also leveraged its social media reach to share project updates and promote the most prominent narrative reports. In total, we shared updates related to the project 12 times, including promoting seven of the narrative reports on X (Twitter) and LinkedIn. Collectively, the posts featuring the project have attained over 24,000 impressions on X/Twitter and over 6,000 impressions on LinkedIn to date.

EFCSN members participating in the project also shared announcements on social media when the project began (for example, [Verificat's post](#) on X; [dpa's post](#) on X; [Les Surligneurs's post](#) on LinkedIn). Organisations that authored narrative reports also promoted them on social media (for example, [FFE Verifica's post](#) on X; [Maldita.es's post](#) on LinkedIn).

Finally, the EFCSN also featured Elections24Check prominently in our internal communications, sharing relevant reports in internal Slack channels and email newsletters, focusing on knowledge sharing and promoting the work members have done. It was also shared in our two first public newsletters.

Researchers

Collaboration with researchers is crucial in the fight against mis- and disinformation, as it brings rigorous **academic scrutiny** and innovative methodologies to the forefront of disinformation analysis. By engaging with experts from various fields, we can leverage their insights and research capabilities to develop more effective strategies for identifying and countering false information.

In our efforts to engage researchers with the Elections24Check platform, we launched a **targeted communication campaign** to attract their interest. This campaign included publishing a brief explaining the statistics and AI modules available on the platform. As a result, we received 43 applications from researchers, of which around 30 were accepted. These researchers were granted access to the API, allowing them to interact with the platform's extensive data.

The researchers plan to utilize the platform's data for a variety of significant projects. These include analyzing coordinated sharing behavior (CSB), monitoring abnormalities and trends, conducting generative AI-related research such as deepfakes detection, and undertaking country-specific projects focused on foreign interference. They are also engaged in election watchdog activities, power dynamics analysis, and platform-specific research.

Website & Backoffice

We designed a **user-friendly public-facing website** that featured an intuitive search function for articles, allowing users easy access to project information and other relevant resources. The backend system **collected data through three main channels**: APIs, a custom WordPress plugin, and manual data ingestion. Data from 46 fact-checking organizations, each with its own methodology, was successfully integrated thanks to the harmonization of labels and ratings. This backend process standardized fact-checking article data, associated metadata, claims, and claim appearances, ensuring uniformity and consistency across all diverse sources.

Feedback from the second survey and qualitative interviews revealed that participants found the system well-integrated and user-friendly. One participant noted, *"It's well integrated. If you develop the process further, automated suggestions for topics, keywords, and countries named would certainly be helpful to speed up the process, even the claim appearances that are mentioned in the fact-checks."* Additionally, the ease of use was frequently highlighted, with comments such as *"Very easy in general,"* and suggestions for further improvements, including the development of an automated tagging system to enhance the data ingestion process. Another participant mentioned, *"Everything was easy. But maybe you can include the user manual in brief words for the questions in the manual input section. For example, which articles are suitable for prebunk, or debunk, or which language should we select."*

On top of this comprehensive database, we developed a backoffice that allowed members to search for fact-checks based on claims, facilitated by automatically translating claims into English. We also implemented robust **video and image search functionalities**, which are particularly useful for fact-checkers in addressing recurring fake news in visual formats. The system included a custom **statistics module and a narrative analysis module** powered by AI, enabling fact-checkers to search for narratives within the database by simply typing keywords. The narrative analysis module was significantly enhanced and re-designed to implement user feedback in April 2024.

According to feedback from the second survey, participants found several features of the website backoffice and database particularly useful in their daily work. The keyword search and the narratives feature were frequently mentioned as valuable tools. One

respondent commented, "*The keywords search and the narratives feature were very useful.*" Others highlighted the usefulness of the narratives explorer and the ability to generate quick insights through interactive charts and graphs, which "**significantly enhanced our decision-making process.**" Additionally, features like real-time data synchronization, advanced search functionality, and the customizable dashboard were noted as critical to supporting their daily activities.

Throughout the project, **maintaining data quality was our top priority.** We implemented a comprehensive approach that included manual reviews, automated checks, and the integration of ongoing feedback forms to assess and enhance the data we collected continuously. Additionally, we engaged in proactive outreach to project participants based on the data to ensure a seamless process for contributors. We consistently maintained the website and data, achieving a high level of satisfaction among participants, with 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the website was well-moderated and maintained. Through continuous feedback and improvements, we streamlined the data ingestion process, making it easier for members to contribute data efficiently. This commitment to quality and user-centered design has been integral to the project's success, enabling the Elections24Check platform to be a reliable and effective tool for combating misinformation during the European Elections and beyond.

Narrative analysis & reports

The Elections24Check project has greatly supported fact-checkers in creating narrative reports by providing essential funding and advanced tools, including AI-powered systems for in-depth analysis of disinformation trends. This support has enabled the production of comprehensive articles and equipped fact-checkers with the necessary data and technology. The impact of these resources is clear: as of August 20th, 48 [narrative reports](#) have been published, with more scheduled for release in the next two weeks.

Data collected through the Elections24Check project served as the basis for the reports created by participants. Here is a selection of findings:

- One in five false claims about migrants in Europe portrays them as criminals.
Based on the article published by EFE Verifica: [link](#).
- Disinformation actors in the 2024 European election campaign shifted their focus from institutions to exploiting national issues. This strategy highlights the evolving nature of disinformation efforts, which are increasingly aimed at undermining social cohesion and democratic processes within the EU.
Based on the article published by Les Surligneurs: [link](#).

- Russian propaganda in Albania surged after the Ukraine invasion, leveraging unverified and copy-paste news from Kremlin sources.

Based on the article published by Faktoje.al: [link](#).

- The main implication that tends to be planted is that Brussels does not want peace in Europe and that the EU is already directly involved in the military conflict and this is putting the world on the verge of World War III.

Based on the article published by FactCheck.bg: [link](#)

- False narratives linking immigration to violence and alleged privileges have gained traction in Portugal ahead of the June 2024 European elections. These disinformation campaigns falsely claim that immigrants, particularly those from certain regions, receive greater benefits than Portuguese citizens, fueling anti-immigrant sentiment.

Based on the article published by Poligrafo: [link](#)

- False narratives are increasingly amplifying the societal impact of crises, according to a report by Dogrula. Disinformation exacerbates public anxiety, especially during crises, by targeting vulnerable groups and spreading divisive content that intensifies hate speech and social tensions.

Based on the article published by Dogrula: [link](#)

- Russian disinformation has increasingly targeted Estonia, focusing on its large Russian-speaking population and its geopolitical ties to NATO and the EU. These campaigns aim to create divisions and undermine Estonia's national security by spreading false narratives about historical revisionism, ethnic tensions, and alleged crimes by Ukrainian refugees.

Based on the article published by Greece Fact Check: [link](#)

Learnings

The Elections24Check project has yielded many valuable insights that are essential for the success of similar initiatives in the future. These learnings emphasize the importance of maintaining high data quality, securing organizational support, and fostering effective collaboration.

First, maintaining **high data quality** is paramount. Ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the data used in fact-checking processes is critical to the project's credibility. Consistent

data quality allows for more effective analysis and better decision-making, ultimately enhancing the initiative's overall impact.

Second, the **support of the participating organizations** is crucial. In this project, over 80% of the funding—exceeding one million euros—was allocated to enabling fact-checkers to dedicate their efforts to the project. This financial support is vital for such initiatives, allowing fact-checkers to focus on their work without resource constraints. Organizational backing ensures the necessary infrastructure, tools, and resources are available to ingest robust and comprehensive data.

Third, **facilitating collaboration** among members by highlighting similarities in fact-checking efforts across different organizations is beneficial. By identifying and promoting shared goals and methods, the project can foster a more unified and efficient approach to combating misinformation. Collaboration encourages knowledge sharing and the development of best practices, strengthening the overall effectiveness of fact-checking initiatives.

By integrating these lessons, future projects can build on Elections24Check's success, creating a more resilient and impactful framework for addressing misinformation across Europe and beyond.

Qualitative & Quantitative feedback

Throughout the Elections24Check project, we strongly emphasised gathering feedback to continuously improve the platform and ensure it met users' needs. To this end, we conducted 30 one-on-one meetings with project members and collected 19 responses from a final survey.

The overall feedback from participants was very positive, with many appreciating the platform's utility and the richness of the database. However, several key issues and areas for improvement were identified:

Participants noted some challenges around **categorization and a common understanding of definitions**, particularly in establishing consistent guidelines across different organizations. This suggests the need for more standardized categorization, especially concerning **pre-bunks, debunks, and fact-checks**.

There was also some **uncertainty regarding the project's scope**, particularly around what articles and data should be ingested into the database. Clarifying this scope and providing more explicit guidelines could streamline the data ingestion process and ensure all relevant content is captured.

Feedback highlighted the platform's significant **potential in media monitoring**. Participants recognized the value of knowing what is being fact-checked across different regions and topics, which can enhance their ability to identify and address emerging disinformation trends.

The importance of **depth of coverage** was emphasized. Participants suggested that **deep country penetration** (more organizations in one country) is just as valuable as extensive geographical coverage, underscoring the importance of breadth and depth in data collection.

While fast, low-quality data ingestion is effortless; the feedback revealed that building a **high-quality, human-annotated dataset** requires time and resources. Participants stressed the need to balance speed and accuracy, preferring high-quality data that supports more detailed and reliable analysis.

Additionally, participants suggested **adding multiple claims per article** to allow for more nuanced analysis and provide the ability to render **different verdicts on different claim appearances** within a single article. The feedback also pointed out that **metadata should be obligatory** to improve the dataset's quality and consistency, and **more information linked to each claim appearance** would be particularly valuable for researchers.

Archiving content remains a significant challenge, especially for social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and video-based platforms, which take more work to archive effectively. Furthermore, participants noted that **communicating biases** in the dataset—such as geographical imbalance, topic selection, and platform affiliation—needs to be clearer in future project iterations.

The final survey had a slightly lower response rate, with 19 participants compared to around 30 in the mid-project survey, likely due to holidays. However, the feedback was still highly informative. The **qualitative feedback** indicated significant improvements, with many organizations citing the usefulness of the platform's features. Process adaptation can also be noticed, as more participants found tasks easier or very easy in the final survey compared to the mid-project survey.

Overall, this feedback provides valuable insights that will inform future improvements to the Elections24Check platform, ensuring it continues to serve as an effective and reliable tool for combating misinformation across Europe.

Future

As the current phase of the Elections24Check project ends, several key steps have been identified to improve future versions of the project and inspire similar initiatives across Europe and beyond. These steps aim to refine the project's effectiveness, improve data management, and increase its impact:

- **Allow multiple claims** per article and associated claim source data to help fact-checkers analyze complex articles containing multiple claims from different authors.
- **Automate data ingestion processes**, thereby reducing the time and effort required by fact-checkers, making the workflow more efficient, and increasing overall productivity.
- **Provide long-term viability**: implementing a permanent database would incentivize fact-checking organizations to streamline their data ingestion. In the Elections24Check project, several participating members opted for manual data ingestion because the more streamlined data ingestion methods were too costly to implement.
- **Define additional metadata**, such as detailed data on sources, potential misinformation harms, claims' impact, and involved entities; this will provide deeper insights and more structured information, enhance the project's ability to analyze the misinformation landscape comprehensively and provide valuable insights for various stakeholders. The EFCSN is open to discussing adjustments to the data framework to serve the anti-disinformation community best.
- **Conduct full article text analysis**: this approach will help identify underlying themes and patterns in the articles, providing richer data for fact-checkers and researchers.
- **Archive claims**: keeping historical records of claims will facilitate future reference and research, allowing for tracking and analyzing past misinformation over time. This will support the creation of a valuable database of misinformation data for long-term studies and strategies.
- **Develop more tailored analytics tools**, including geographical analysis and claim-matching functionalities. These tools could provide more precise and location-specific insights, empowering fact-checkers to address misinformation effectively.

While the current project has concluded, the lessons learned and the future steps identified can guide the creation of similar initiatives throughout Europe and beyond. By building on Elections24Check, future projects can enhance their methods, streamline processes, and achieve a broader impact in combating misinformation.