

# First Draft Partner Network Meeting

Council of Europe, Strasbourg, July 3, 2017

*Report by First Draft*



First Draft conducted morning meetings at the Council of Europe for members of its Partner Network and Council of Europe staff on Monday, July 3. First Draft Director Claire Wardle opened the meeting, welcoming everyone and noting that this month marks the organization's

second anniversary of its founding.

Jan Kleijssen gave remarks on behalf of the COE, stating that the COE is concerned with real and alleged “fake news.”

“This year’s focus is on populism and how strong Europe’s checks are,” he said. “Populism and fake news seem to be entwined. When we speak about freedom of expression, there’s often a ‘but’ in the sentence. Freedom of expression is a cornerstone of democracy. There’s an alarming picture developing because more countries fail to guarantee an enabling environment for journalists.”

Kleijssen went on to say that it’s essential to have large companies at the table to talk about the problem. “They hold so much data on the public and the influence to shape democracy,” he said. “They also have an interest to maintain quality on the platform to sustain itself.”

Kleijssen said that the COE is engaged on the issue of fake news and hosting an organization like First Draft is one demonstration of that effort.

## ***Session 1: Impact of Closed Networks on the French Election - Padraic Ryan***

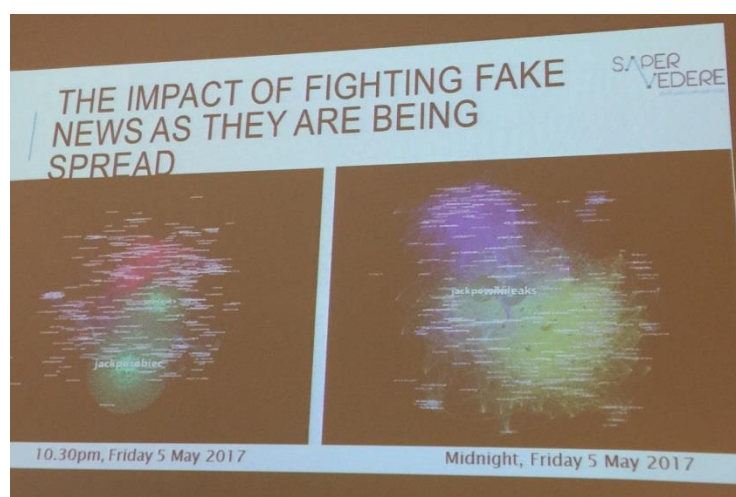
The program opened with a presentation by Padraic Ryan, a senior journalist from Storyful, on understanding the use of closed messaging systems during the French

election. He explained that 4chan wasn't just about hateful speech, but that users on 4chan were seen debating the best techniques to push Marine LePen's agenda with anti-Macron themes. Many of these coordinated efforts were in English, with additional campaigns launched on Discord, which is an invitation-only conversation platform. Ryan showed how these platforms were used to coordinate 'Twitter raids' with similar behavior on Facebook underlining how you have to monitor multiple platforms when doing this work, as they are connected in really important ways.

Ryan also suggested that newsrooms need a reporter that focuses on 4chan and other similar platforms, and policies for how to deal with closed networks. For example, is it acceptable for reporters to go "digitally undercover"? What are the guidelines for publishing leaks?

He also asked whether newsrooms are being complete in their reporting? He gave the recent example of US President Donald Trump's Tweet that included a video of him 'beating up' a CNN logo. "The interesting reports were not about the Tweet," Ryan said, "But rather, the origination of that video on a Reddit post. The reporter who got that had the real story."

## ***Session 2: Impact of Fighting Fake News as they Are Being Spread - Nicolas Vanderbiest and Alexandre Alaphilippe***



Nicolas Vanderbiest and Alexandre Alaphilippe have a new company, Saper Vedere in Brussels that provides insights on how social media posts are shared, and creates visualizations to reveal how these networks are connected to particular people or bots, and the political agendas of those social media handles.

They argued that journalists should spend more time investigating the sources of disinformation, rather than focusing on fact-checking the claims. By undermining the source quickly, it might be more effective than waiting to publish a fact-check, which is often a slower process. Here are [the slides](#).

### **Session 3: CrossCheck: Lessons Learned**

Reporters from First Draft's CrossCheck project from the AFP, Le Monde, Les Echos and Rue89 Strasbourg spoke on a panel about the collaboration project with 37 newsrooms across France on the verification of the French election.

Here are [the slides](#) which show metrics from the project.

Le Monde said: "You are stronger with more newsrooms saying the same thing."

Rue 89 said: "We are a small newsroom. It was a relief to be with all newsrooms and get help with the election reporting."

All four journalists said they'd like the CrossCheck project to continue. "There is no scoop to a debunk," said Le Monde. "We can work together on that aspect without competition."



*From left: Claire Wardle, Amadine Ambregnie from AFP, Clemence Lemaistre from Les Echos, Samuel Laurent from Le Monde and Pierre France from Rue89 Strasbourg*

### **Session 4: Newship as a Tool for Identifying whether and how Misinformation is Spreading Online**

During the CrossCheck project and the UK Election Project, NewsWhip was a key tool. John Hayes of NewsWhip demonstrated the NewsWhip's Spike platform and showed how it can be used to identify misinformation being shared online, and how it helps journalists decide whether or not to debunk the information. The platform has a very effective prediction algorithm which accurately predicts how far a post will be shared and on what platforms.

## Session 5: Lessons Learned from the UK Election Project

The last panel of the day discussed the U.K. election collaboration between First Draft's verification experts and Full Fact fact checkers.

The Full Fact team saw for the first time how online conversations deviated from what was in the press and therefore began to fact check online claims.



*From left: Claire Wardle, and from Full Fact Phoebe Arnold and Will Moy.*

“Speed matters hugely,” said Full Fact director Will Moy. “Images are really shareable and is where the ballgame is in online sharing. We saw more nuanced agendas of information online; unlike during the U.S. election with fake stories written by Macedonian teens. This project was about listening to online conversation and debunking them.”

Both First Draft and Full Fact agreed that verification specialists must work more closely with fact-checkers. The audience doesn't see the difference between false claims by politicians and manipulated images or videos. They are seen as distinct journalism skills, but increasingly, because misinformation is spreading online, people with these two sets of skills must collaborate.

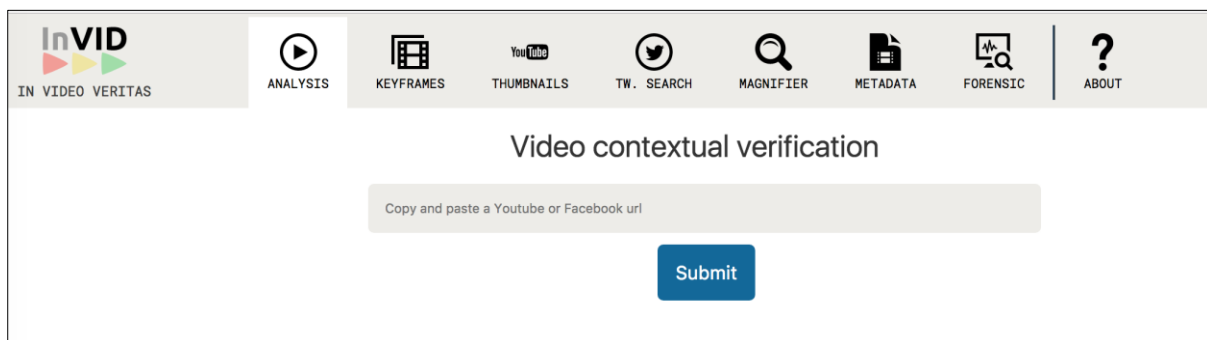
The question of funding for these types of projects was raised. Claire Wardle said that funding sources have to respond to the needs of news organizations more quickly. That is, the U.K. election project was supported financially by Google News Lab and Facebook simply because they were able to quickly respond to the project's need. Foundations plan their giving a year in advance, but this long-term planning needs to be reconsidered if they're going to support responsive efforts on projects that inform the public and strive to rebuild public trust with the media.

Here is the [collection of newsletters](#) that were sent out to newsrooms during the UK election. (Password: UKElectionWatch)

Here is our piece about [lessons learned](#) from the UK project and [this piece](#) explained the tools and techniques we used to monitor online conversations and misinformation.

### ***Session 6: Launch of the InVid Verification Toolbox by Denis Teyssou of InVID / AFP***

Denis used the session to launch the plugin tool which has been designed by InVID. It includes 7 different tools which are invaluable for people working on verifying content. The majority of the tools are based on other tools which we now all use via separate tabs. This plug-in brings it all into one place. You can download [here](#).



Most exciting is the Twitter search function which allows you to search by minutes, rather than just days. This will be very useful during breaking news events when you want to find the earliest tweets about an event.

You can watch a YouTube demo [here](#) which shows you how all of the 7 tools work.