

High-Level Conference on Media Literacy and Information Integrity: Building Resilience to Disinformation and FIMI in Europe

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Conclusions/Closing Remarks

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Democratic security in the “new normal” of disinformation and FIMI

- Opening the conference, President Maia Sandu stressed that **disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) are no longer episodic threats**, often limited to electoral periods, but constitute a persistent and evolving “new normal”, affecting democracies all across Europe.
- Echoing this, Secretary General Alain Berset [highlighted](#) that the challenge today is no longer only access to information, but also **what people choose to believe and which sources they trust**, in an environment where information is abundant but not always reliable.
- These reflections shaped the overall conclusions of the conference: **FIMI and disinformation represent systemic and strategic threats that aim to distort public debate, undermine trust in democratic institutions and polarise societies**. Strengthening democratic security therefore requires continuous, long-term resilience, not only in moments of heightened vulnerability, such as elections, but as a permanent feature of democratic governance.

FIMI as a systemic and evolving threat to democratic security

- FIMI was identified by several speakers as a particularly serious and evolving form of disinformation, often orchestrated as **part of broader hybrid strategies** aimed at destabilising democratic societies. It combines information manipulation with other forms of interference, including cyber operations and coordinated influence campaigns. In addition, FIMI often operates through coordinated and cross-border actions.
- While the conference discussions showed that countries experience and conceptualise the threats posed by FIMI differently, the **need for collective action is clear**, including through strengthened cooperation and shared frameworks such as the [New Democratic Pact for Europe](#).

Countering disinformation and FIMI must respect Article 10 ECHR

- Several speakers stressed that responses to disinformation and FIMI must remain firmly grounded in **human rights, particularly freedom of expression**, protected under **Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)**. Efforts to address disinformation must respect the principles of **legality, necessity and proportionality**, ensuring that protecting information integrity strengthens – rather than restricts – democratic debate.

Democracies face different national challenges

- The conference also highlighted that disinformation and FIMI affects countries differently depending on political context, media landscapes, and institutional resilience. National experiences show that **effective responses must be adapted to specific circumstances while drawing on common standards** and cooperation across Europe, including Council of Europe standards.

Technology, AI, and digital ecosystems are reshaping the information landscape

- The conference also discussed how digital technologies, algorithmic amplification, and AI-generated content are transforming how information is produced, amplified, and consumed. While offering new opportunities, they also increase the scale and sophistication of manipulation. Addressing these challenges requires **human-rights-based digital governance, transparency, and accountability in platform design**, in line with the 2023 [Guidance Note addressing the spread of online mis- and disinformation](#) that was presented by Ms Aikaterini Polyzou, Chair of the CDMSI in the third panel.

Media literacy builds long-term societal resilience

- A central theme of the conference was the importance of **Media and Information Literacy (MIL)** as a long-term response to disinformation. Empowering citizens to critically assess information, recognise manipulation, and understand how digital systems work strengthens users' and society's capacity to resist disinformation and is key to democratic participation and resilience in an increasingly complex information environment.

Strong media ecosystems remain a key safeguard

- **To complement MIL measures, independent, pluralistic and sustainable media, quality journalism, and robust public service media are essential** for ensuring access to reliable information. Supporting these institutions strengthens trust in democratic discourse and provides a frontline defence against disinformation.

A whole-of-society response is necessary

- The conference emphasised that governments alone cannot address these challenges. Effective responses require cooperation between **public authorities, media**

organisations, regulators, technology companies, researchers, educators, and civil society, reflecting a broad whole-of-society approach. International cooperation is also key as the information and communication space has no borders.

Council of Europe guidance, RESIST, and international cooperation

- Under the framework of the New Democratic Pact for Europe, the Council of Europe continues to provide **legal standards, policy guidance, and cooperation projects** to support member States in building resilience to disinformation. These include the two CDMSI policy documents that have been launched at the Conference: [National MIL strategies. Practical steps and indicators](#) and [Resisting disinformation: 10 building blocks to strengthen information integrity](#).
- The [RESIST – Strengthening Societal Resilience to Disinformation in Europe](#) project (EEA and Norway Grants) supports participating states in assessing vulnerabilities, identifying good practices and developing national resilience strategies.
- As disinformation and FIMI often operate across borders, **international cooperation is essential**. The Council of Europe provides a platform for collaboration, dialogue, and shared standards, enabling member States to collectively protect democratic values and strengthen information integrity across Europe. As Ms Heini Huotari, Chair of Council of Europe Committee of Experts on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (PC-FIMI), has explained in the second panel of this Conference, there is currently, within the Council of Europe, a common reflection process around FIMI and the most appropriate ways to more effectively address related challenges, in a human rights and rule of law compliant manner.