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HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW

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DROITS DE L'HOMME, DÉMOCRATIE ET ÉTAT DE DROIT

European Parliament

Committee on Civil Liberties Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE)

Monitoring Group on Democracy, Fundamental Rights and Rule of Law

Disinformation in COVID-19 time

Presentation

14 May 2019

Patrick Penninckx

Head of the Information Society Department

Disinformation pandemic?

Source: Repeating a lie does not make it true, euvsdisinfo.eu

Disinformation pandemic?

DISINFORMATION CASES ABOUT COVID-19

Source: Repeating a lie does not make it true, euvsdisinfo.eu

Disinformation pandemic?
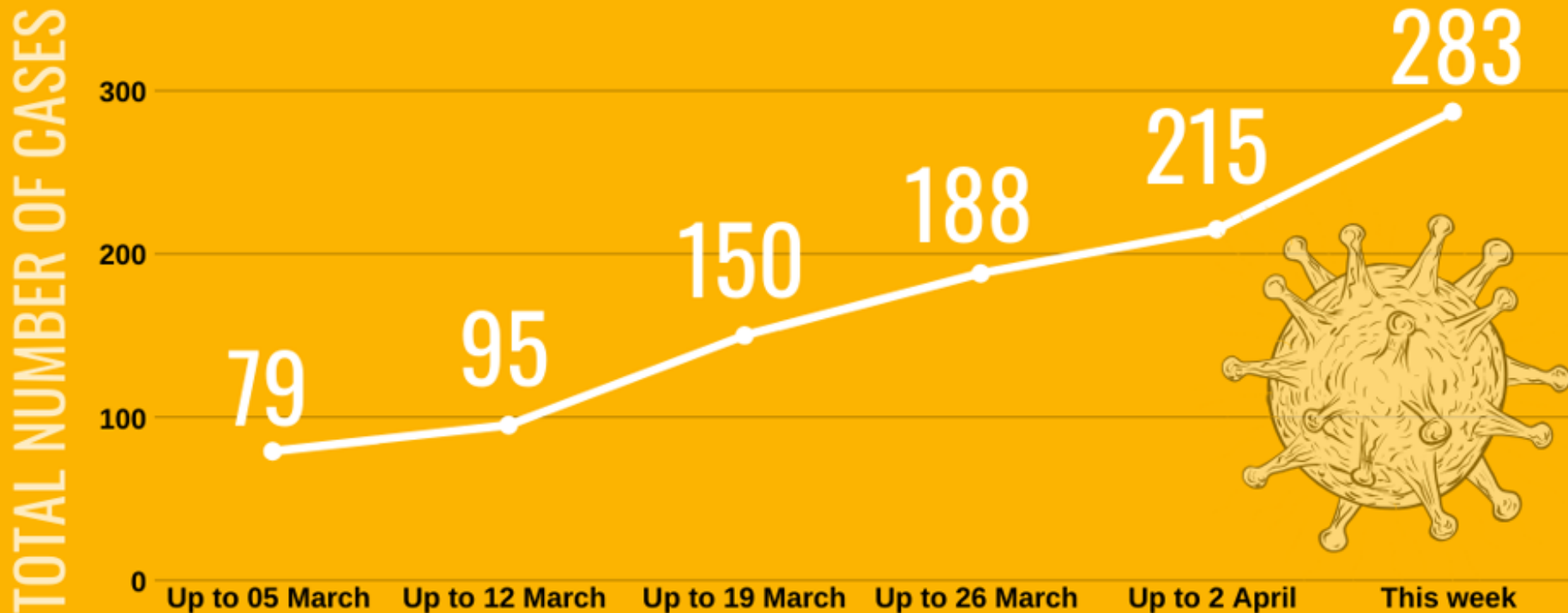
COVID-19 – THE FIGHT FOR A CURE: ONE GIGANTIC WESTERN PHARMA RIP-OFF

Source: Southfront.org, debunked on euvsdisinfo.eu

Disinformation pandemic?
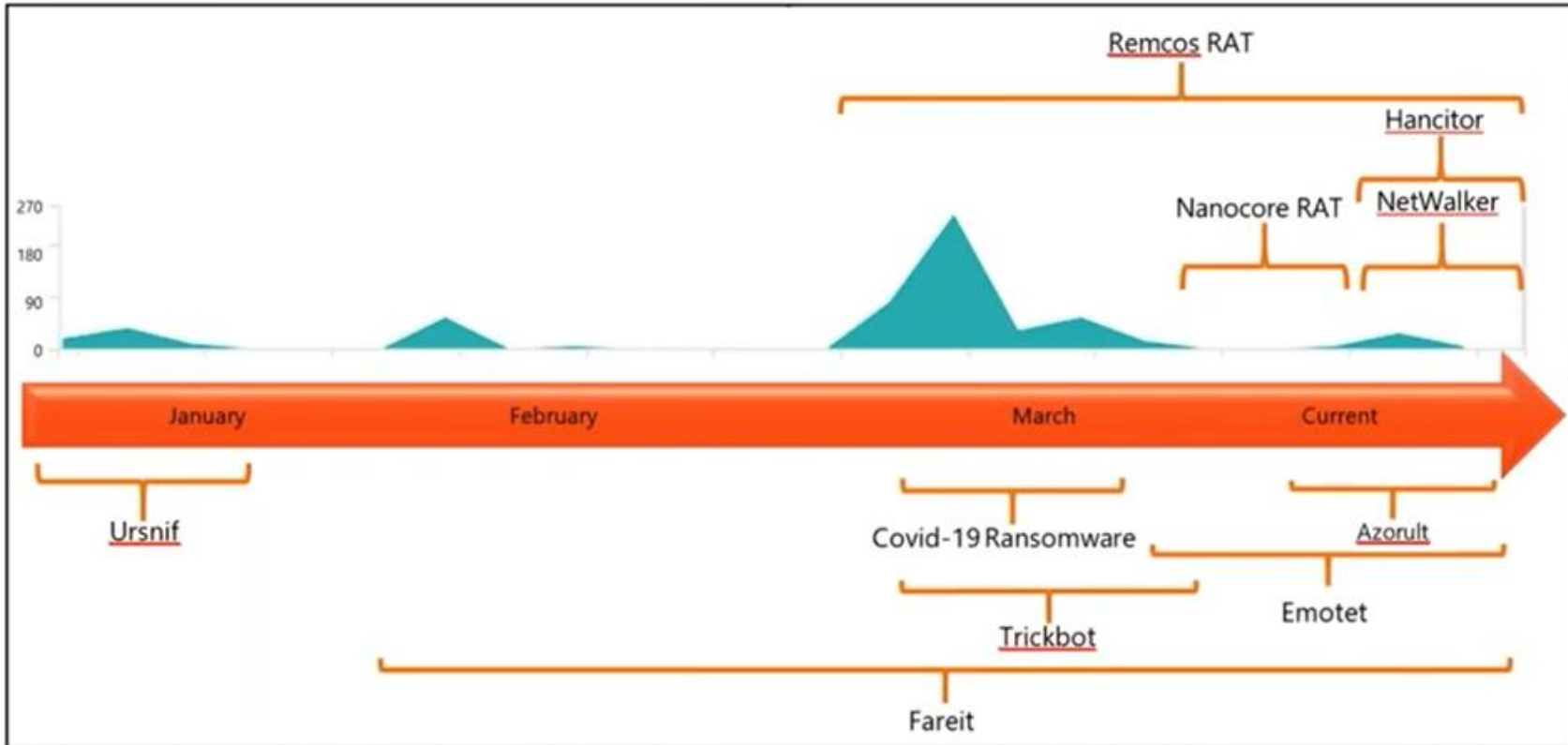
Nearly half of the population has read fake news about the Coronavirus

TOPICS: Coronavirus In Norway   COVID-19   Fake News About The Coronavirus
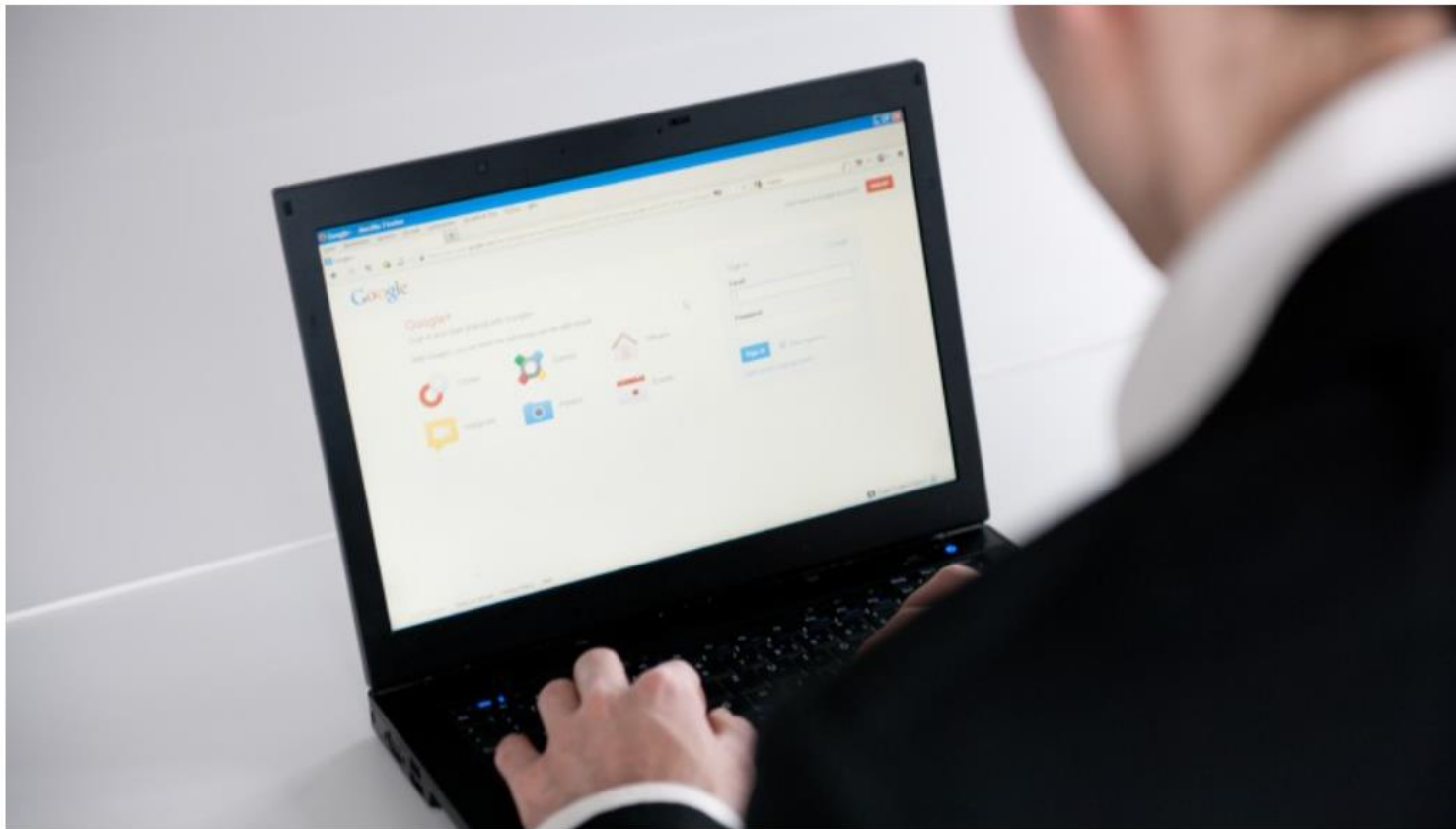
Source: Norwaytoday.info

Disinformation pandemic?

500% increase in COVID related SPAM mails in March
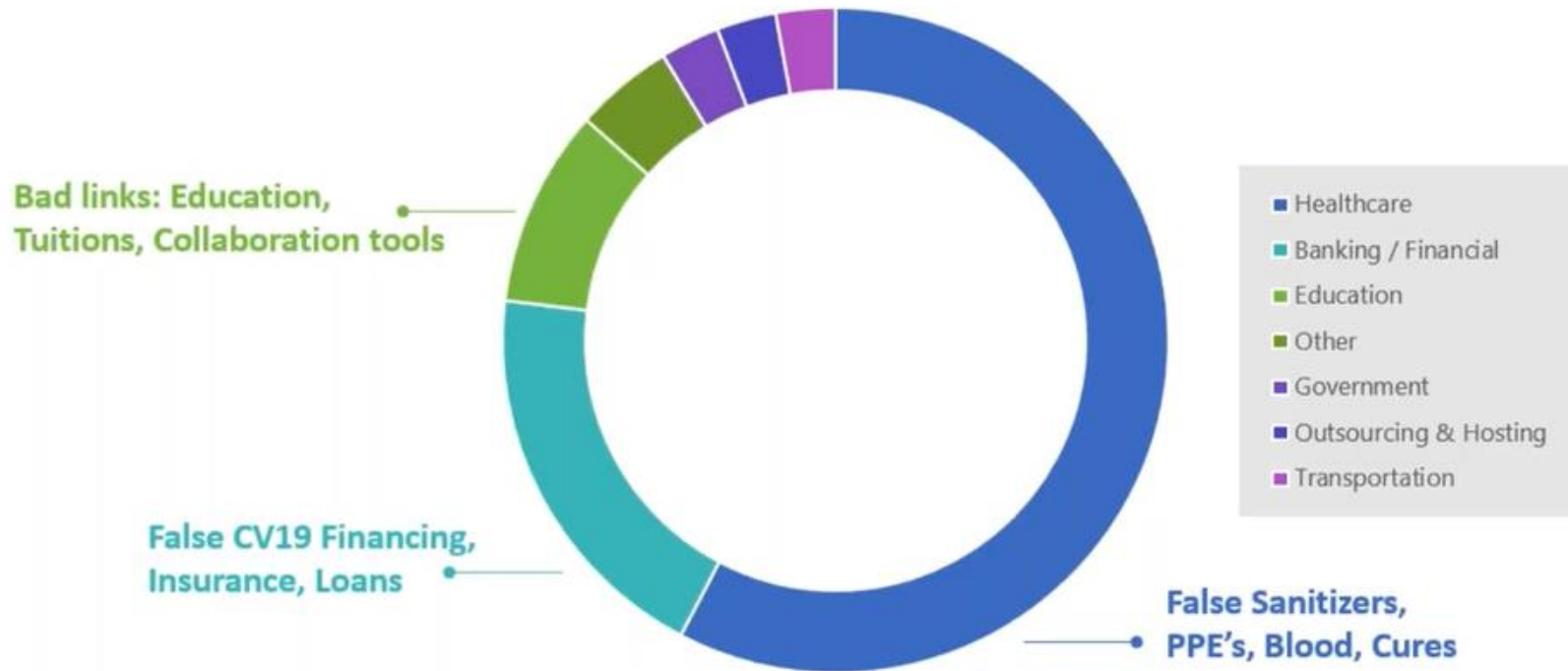
These COVID related SPAM emails are further used to spread prevalent malware like Fareit, Trickbot and COVID ransomware.

THIS INFORMATION IS MCAFEE CONFIDENTIAL; IT IS NOT TO BE RELIED ON BY ANY 3RD PARTY WITHOUT PRIOR WRITTEN CONSENT

McAfee   3

Source: ASSOCHAM webinar: Building Cyber Hygiene & Security Practices in Covid times   6

Sectors Targeted

McAfee
Together is power.

The volume of threats related to Covid-19 has been significant, with lures used in all manner of attacks.
Tracking these campaigns reveals the most targeted sector is healthcare, followed by finance, and then education.

Bad links: Education, Tuitions, Collaboration tools

False CV19 Financing, Insurance, Loans

False Sanitizers, PPE's, Blood, Cures

- Healthcare
- Banking / Financial
- Education
- Other
- Government
- Outsourcing & Hosting
- Transportation

Source: ASSOCHAM webinar: Building Cyber Hygiene & Security Practices in Covid times 7

FAKE NEWS – A Bigger Killer Than The Virus Itself...

INDEPENDENT
UK'S LARGEST QUALITY DIGITAL NEWS BRAND

NEWS   CORONAVIRUS ADVICE   US POLITICS   VOICES   SPORT   CULTURE   INDY/LIFE   INDYBEST   INDY100   VOUCHERS   PREMIUM   CLIMATE BLOGS

Coronavirus: Hundreds dead in Iran from drinking methanol amid fake reports it cures disease

As many as 480 people may have died from drinking the toxic substance following rumours that ingesting high-proof alcohol is a remedy for Covid-19

Bel Trew Middle East Correspondent | @beltrew |
Friday 27 March 2020 14:19 |

MEMO   NEWS   OPINION   REVIEWS   FEATURES   PUBLICATIONS   MULTIMEDIA   MORE

600 people die in Iran from drinking neat alcohol to cure coronavirus

- **After an initial spike, COVID-19 related domains registered per day are constantly decreasing**

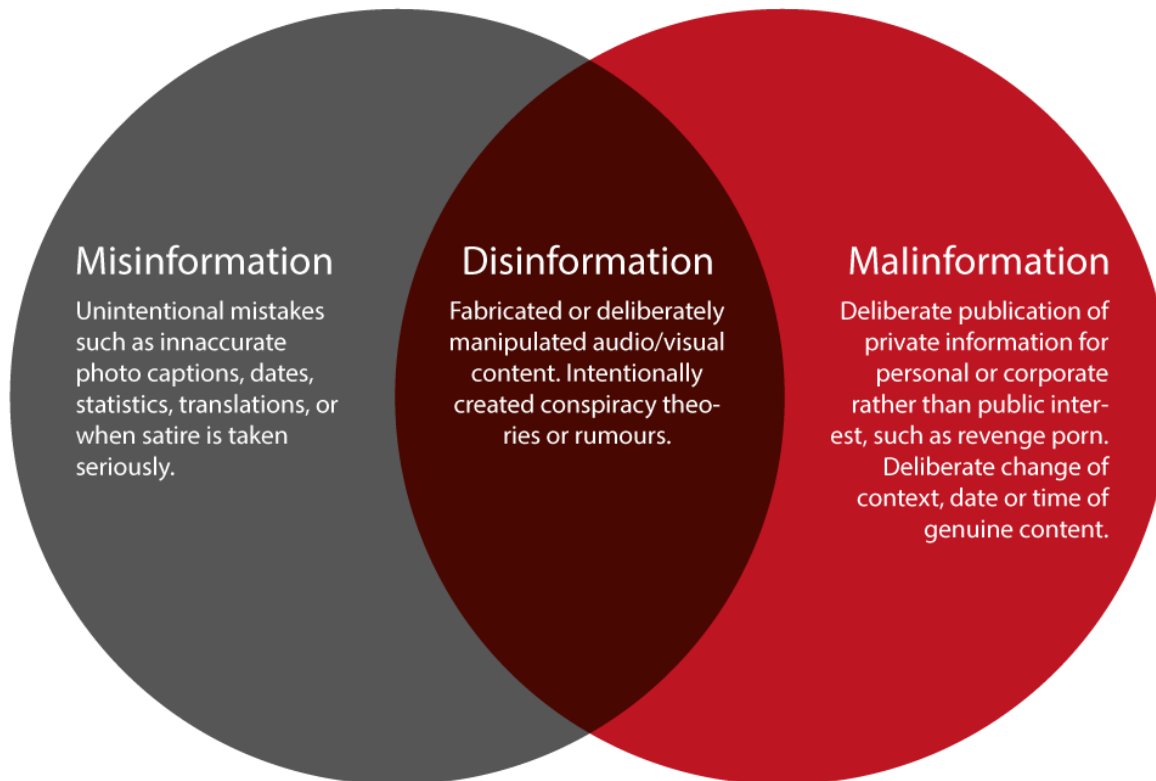(Source: DomainTools)

COVID-19 related on-line threats
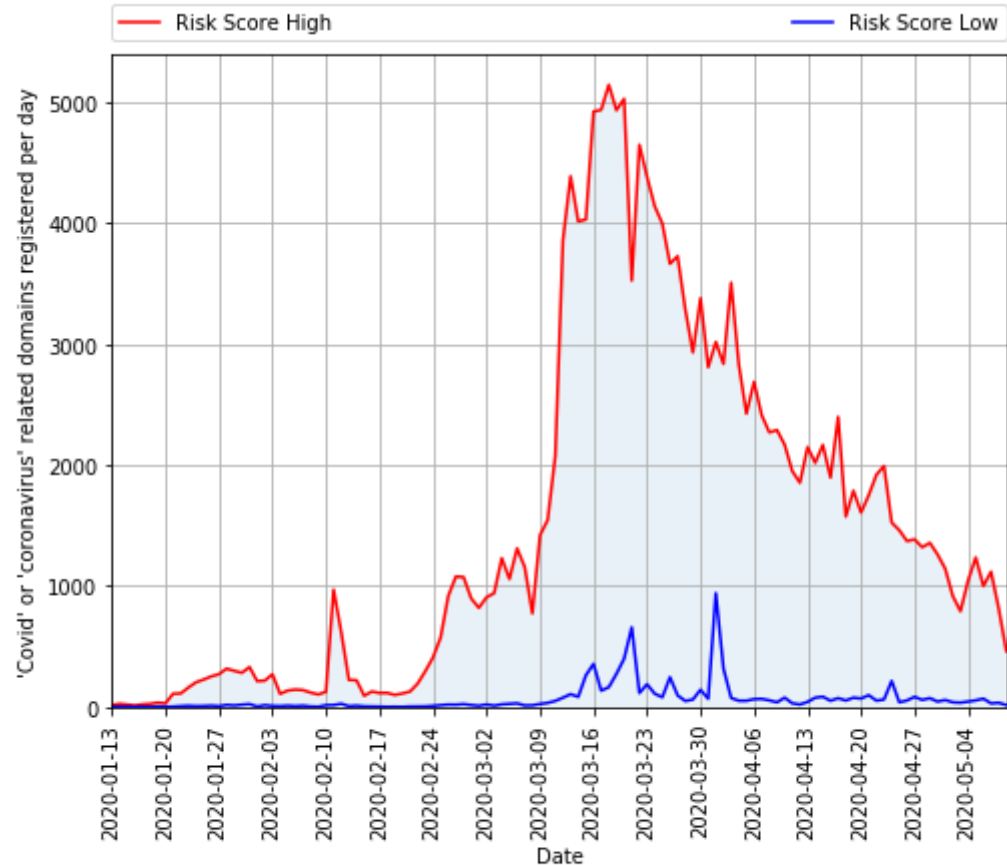
- **After an initial spike, COVID-19 related domains registered per day are constantly decreasing**

- **COVID-19 related spam also decreasing, but still high → Phishing and other social engineering frauds**

17 APR 2020 NEWS

Google: We Block 240 Million Daily #COVID19 Spam Messages

TYPES OF INFORMATION DISORDER

FALSENESS   INTENT TO HARM

Misinformation
Unintentional mistakes such as innaccurate photo captions, dates, statistics, translations, or when satire is taken seriously.

Disinformation
Fabricated or deliberately manipulated audio/visual content. Intentionally created conspiracy theories or rumours.

Malinformation
Deliberate publication of private information for personal or corporate rather than public interest, such as revenge porn. Deliberate change of context, date or time of genuine content.

Source: Information Disorder, Council of Europe study

Why is disinformation a problem

The right to free and fair elections

The right to non-discrimination

The right to health

The right to freedom of expression

➢ **Incorrect information** may influence the way that individuals vote.

➢ **Disinformation is often targeting specific individuals** and their reputation.

➢ **Disinformation sometimes focuses on particular groups in society**, especially refugees and migrants, or ethnic minorities; intentionally or involuntarily inciting violence, discrimination or hostility.

➢ **False information about health** and disease prevention can lead to serious risks for people.

➢ **Inappropriate, rash or too restrictive responses** to disinformation pose risks to freedom of expression and media freedom.

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Advances in technology make it easy to create fake images and videos.

New gatekeepers of information - search and social media platforms - exert a strong influence on how individuals are informed and form their opinions.

The shift of communication and information to the internet has caused a shift of audiences away from the mainstream media to social media.

Fewer media manage public debate and influence public opinion, as the success of the platforms translated into a loss of ad revenue for the media.
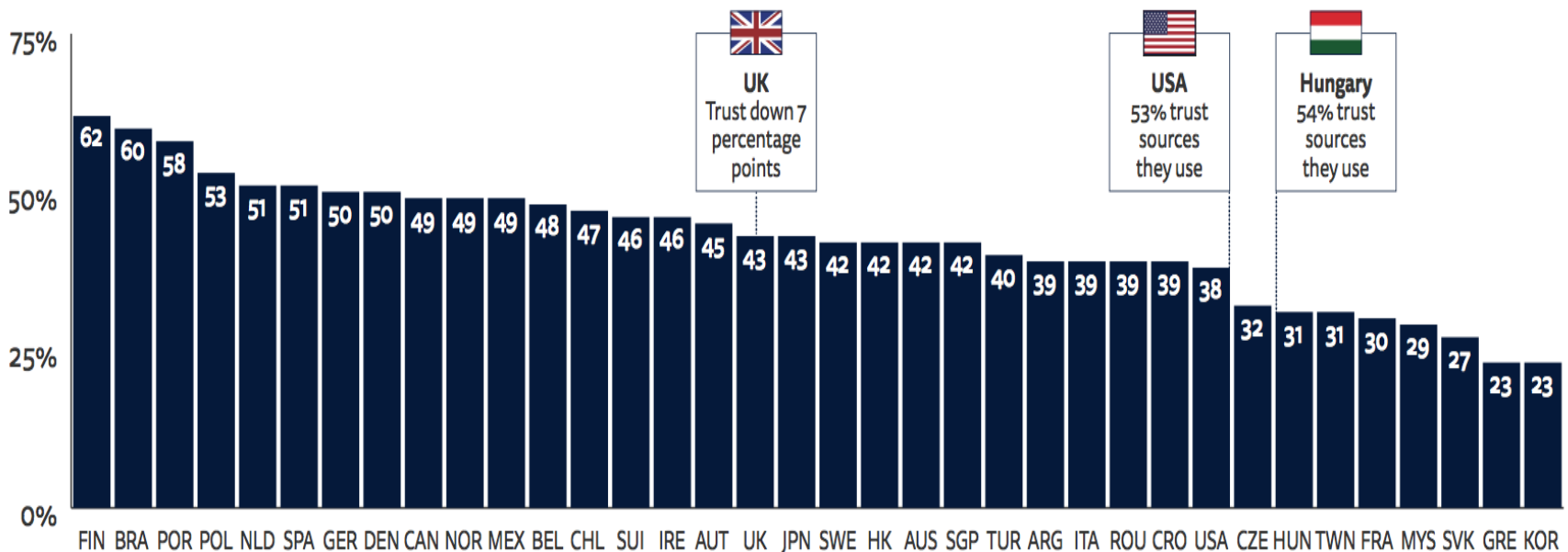
Result: Decline of trust in information and media as people consume both established and unreliable news sources without distinction, and become confused what is true and whom to believe.

OVERALL TRUST IN NEWS MEDIA

ALL MARKETS

✓ Fragmentation of public media spaces

✓ Polarisation

✓ Ideologically laden echo-chambers

UK
Trust down 7 percentage points

USA
53% trust sources they use

Hungary
54% trust sources they use

Q6_2016_1/6. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - I think you can trust most news most of the time/I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time Base: Total sample in each market.

Source: Digital News Report 2017, Reuters Institute

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WORRY ABOUT QUALITY INFORMATION

Percent who agree

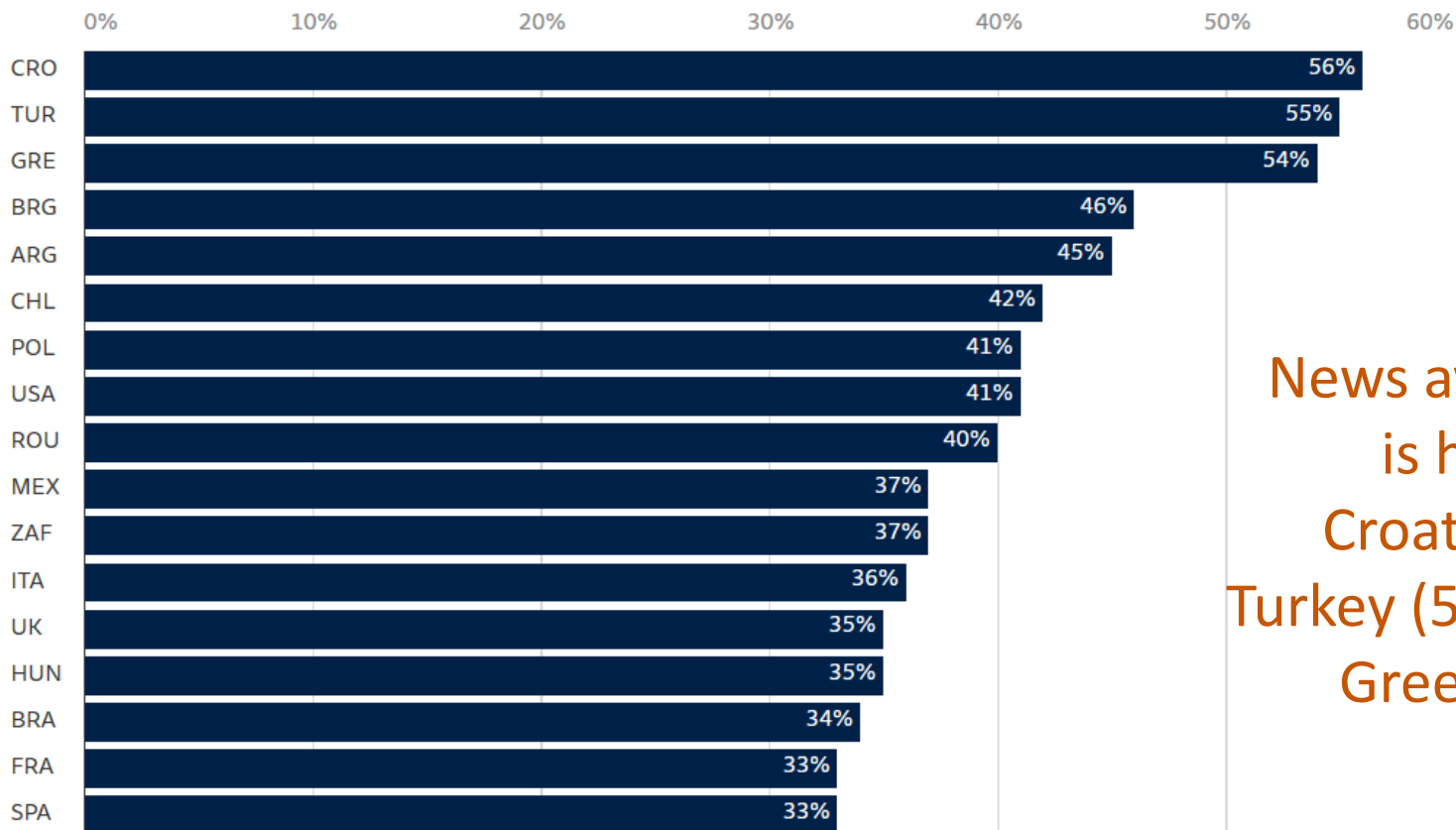The media I use are **contaminated with untrustworthy information**

⊥

57%

I worry about false information or **fake news being used as a weapon**

⊥

76% +6 pts

Change, 2018 to 2020

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer 2020

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Disinformation brings distrust

PROPORTION THAT OFTEN OR SOMETIMES ACTIVELY AVOIDS THE NEWS

All markets

Country	Percentage
CRO	56%
TUR	55%
GRE	54%
BRG	46%
ARG	45%
CHL	42%
POL	41%
USA	41%
ROU	40%
MEX	37%
ZAF	37%
ITA	36%
UK	35%
HUN	35%
BRA	34%
FRA	33%
SPA	33%

News avoidance is highest in Croatia (56%), Turkey (55%), and Greece (54%)

Source: Digital News Report 2019, Reuters Institute

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Disinformation brings distrust

NO INSTITUTION SEEN AS BOTH COMPETENT AND ETHICAL

(Competence score, net ethical score)

ETHICAL
35

LESS COMPETENT ◄ - 50 ————————————————— 50 ► COMPETENT

NGOs (-4, 12)

Business (14, -2)

Media (-17, -7)

Government (-40, -19)

-35
UNETHICAL

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer 2020

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Action against disinformation
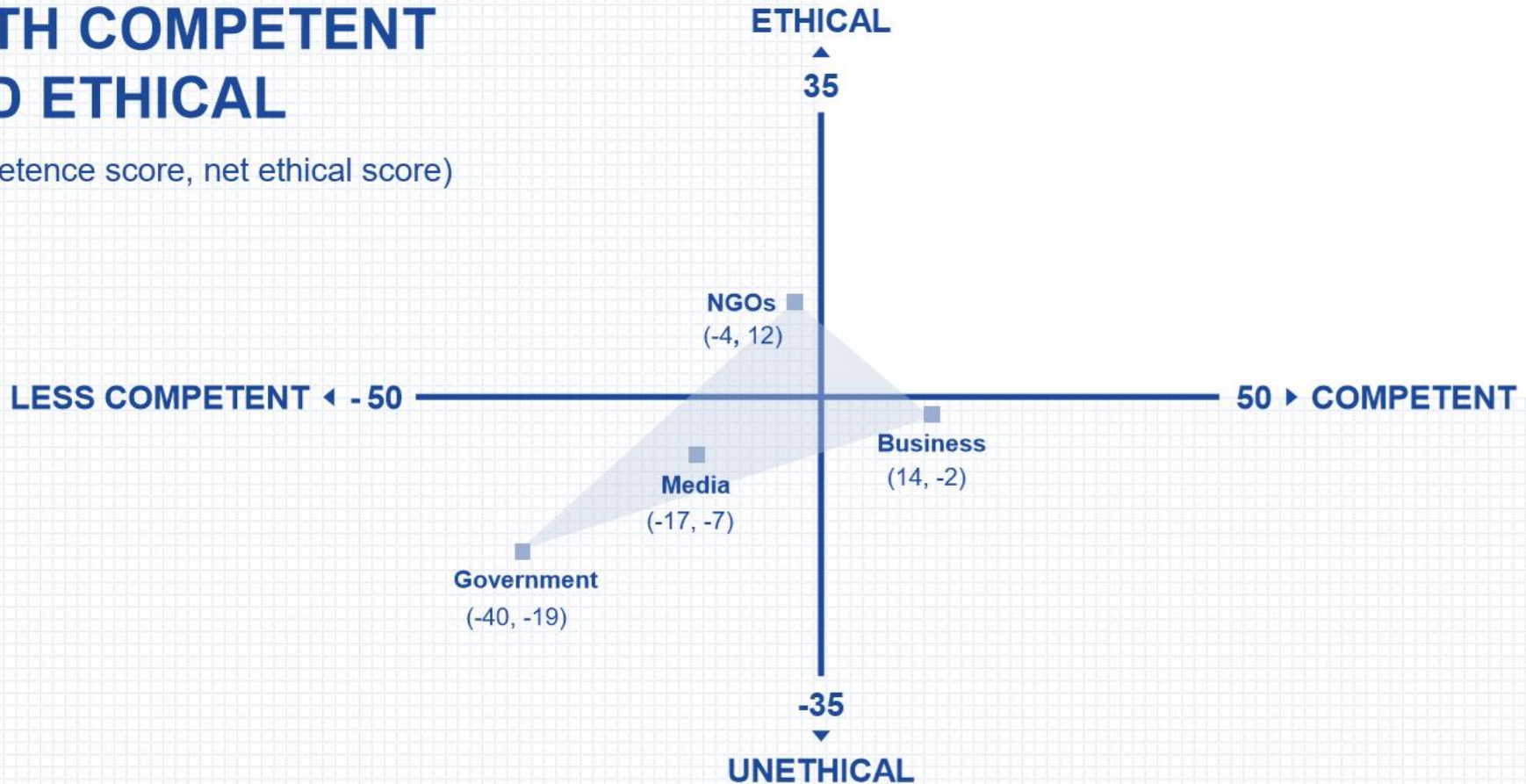
December 2018

#EUvsDisinfo

ACTION PLAN AGAINST DISINFORMATION

UNDERSTANDING THE THREAT AND STEPPING UP EUROPEAN RESPONSE

Disinformation is an evolving challenge, with high potential to negatively influence democratic processes and societal debates. Its increasingly adverse effects on society across the European Union call for a coordinated, joint and sustainable approach to comprehensively counter it.

83% OF EUROPEANS THINK FAKE NEWS IS A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY *

73% OF INTERNET USERS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT DISINFORMATION ONLINE IN THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD *

Who is benefitting?

WEAPONS OF MASS DISTRACTION

Most disinformation is created, launched and spread with either political or economic objectives by:

- ✓ A range of antidemocratic movements
- ✓ Partisan political actors
- ✓ Powerful economic forces
- ✓ Foreign states can benefit from deploying disinformation campaigns
- ✓ Various individuals using online infrastructure to earn money

STATES

➢ **Often entrust the important task** of deliberating "what is true and what false", together with the liability, to search and social media platforms

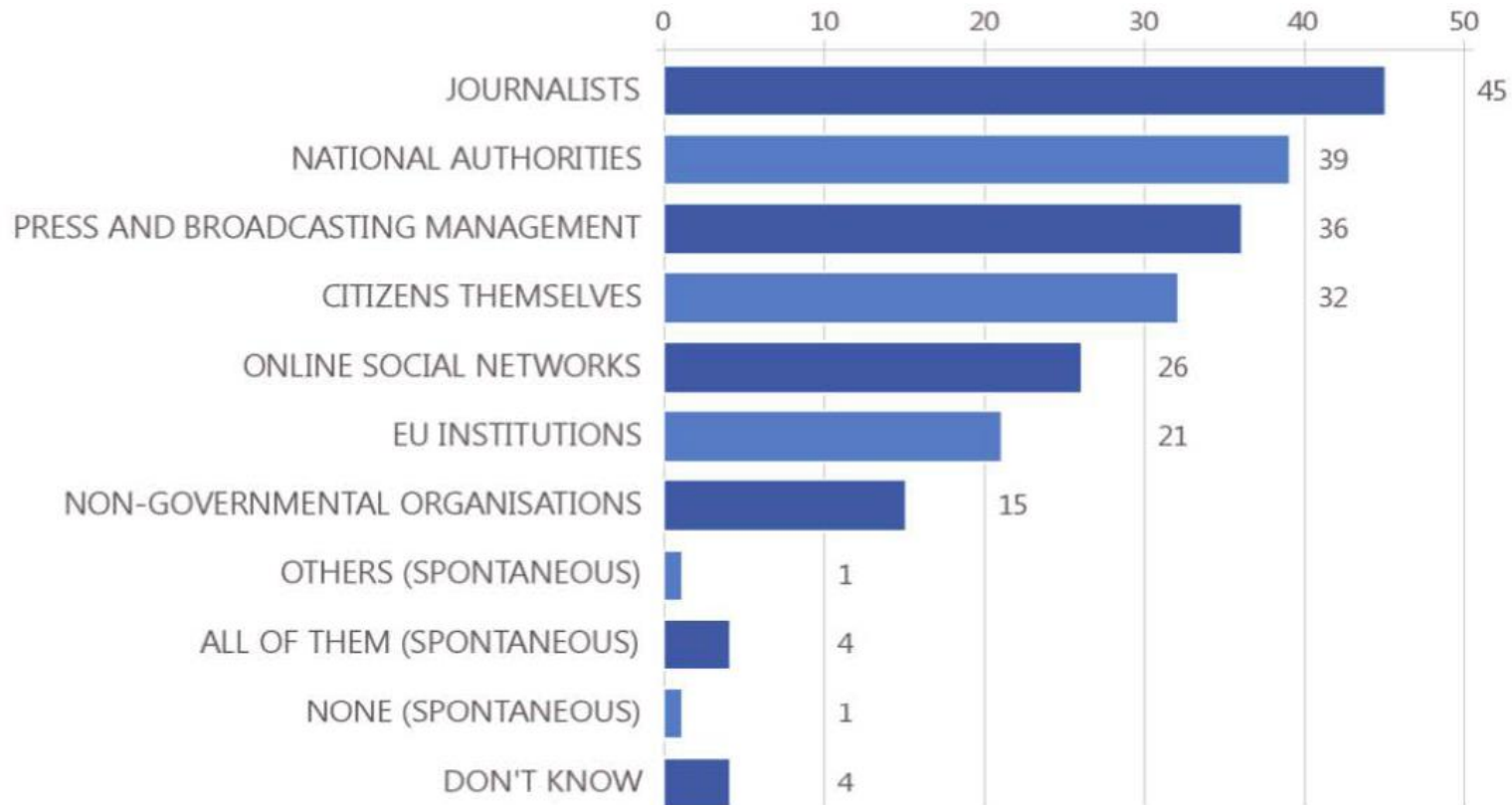➢ **Some states have enacted legislation** for specific cases of disinformation

PLATFORMS

➢ **Routinely remove or block content** without explaining why, based on "community standards" rules

➢ **There is no independent oversight** of their takedown practices

Who should act?

Which of the following institutions and media actors should act to stop the spread of "fake news" ?

Eurobarometer 2018
Study: Automated tackling of disinformation

EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service

Empowerment of quality journalism

➢ **Recommendation on promoting a favourable environment** for quality journalism in the digital age

Empowerment of media and information literacy skills

➢ **Study on supporting quality journalism** through media and information literacy

Ensuring compliance of online platforms

➢ **Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)2** on the roles and responsibilities of internet intermediaries

Awareness of artificial intelligence systems manipulative capabilities

➢ **Declaration on the manipulative capabilities** of algorithmic processes

➢ **Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)1** on the human rights impacts of algorithmic systems

Serious impact of disinformation on individuals' right to health is a real threat.

Exceptional circumstances justify exceptional measures including some restrictions on freedom of expression.

Malicious spreading of disinformation may be tackled with ex-post targeted sanctions.

Media play a key role in this crisis and also has an increased responsibility to provide accurate, reliable information to the public.

Some governments are using the crisis as a pretext to introduce disproportionate restrictions to media freedom.

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How people consume COVID-19 news:

- ✓ **People consume more news** than usually, with a staggering 99% accessing COVID-19 news at least once a day.

- ✓ **People use more traditional media**, especially public broadcasters, to get their COVID-19 news.

- ✓ **Official sources are not only used but also trusted**, while the social media have taken a back seat.

- ✓ **Disinformation and confusion about COVID-19 are present** but people are more aware and some check other sources.

Source: Ofcom weekly research

Image: The Economist

Mark Zuckerberg said he believed **new regulation was needed in four areas:**

- **Harmful content**

- **Election integrity**

- **Privacy**

- **Data portability**

(The Guardian,
30 March 2019)

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Thanks for your attention !

further resources:

www.coe.int/**freedomofexpression**

www.coe.int/**dataprotection**

www.coe.int/**cybercrime**

www.coe.int/**AI**

Facebook Page
Information Society Group

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47 MEMBER STATES
47 ÉTATS MEMBRES

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Albania - Albanie
Tirana

Estonia - Estonie
Tallinn

Lithuania - Lituanie
Vilnius

San Marino - Saint-Marin
San Marino - Saint-Marin

Andorra - Andorre
Andorra-la-Vella
Andorre-la-Vieille

Finland - Finlande
Helsinki

Luxembourg
Luxembourg

Serbia - Serbie
Belgrade

Armenia - Arménie
Yerevan - Erevan

France
Paris

Malta - Malte
Valletta - La Valette

Slovakia - Slovaquie
Bratislava

Austria - Autriche
Vienna - Vienne

Georgia - Géorgie
Tbilisi - Tbilissi

Republic of Moldova -
République de Moldova
Chişinău

Slovenia - Slovénie
Ljubljana

Azerbaijan - Azerbaïdjan
Baku - Bakou

Germany - Allemagne
Berlin

Monaco
Monaco

Spain - Espagne
Madrid

Belgium - Belgique
Brussels - Bruxelles

Greece - Grèce
Athens - Athènes

Montenegro -
Monténégro
Podgorica

Sweden - Suède
Stockholm

Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bosnie-Herzégovine
Sarajevo

Hungary - Hongrie
Budapest

Netherlands - Pays-Bas
Amsterdam

Switzerland -
Suisse
Bern - Berne

Bulgaria - Bulgarie
Sofia

Iceland - Islande
Reykjavik

Norway - Norvège
Oslo

"The former Yugoslav
Republic of
Macedonia" -
"L'ex-République
yougoslave de
Macédoine"
Skopje

Croatia - Croatie
Zagreb

Ireland - Irlande
Dublin

Poland - Pologne
Warsaw - Varsovie

Turkey - Turquie
Ankara

Cyprus - Chypre
Nicosia - Nicosie

Italy - Italie
Rome

Portugal
Lisbon - Lisbonne

Turkey - Turquie
Ankara

Czech Republic -
République Tchèque
Prague

Latvia - Lettonie
Riga

Romania - Roumanie
Bucharest - Bucarest

Ukraine
Kyiv - Kiev

Denmark - Danemark
Copenhagen - Copenhague

Liechtenstein
Vaduz

Russian Federation -
Fédération de Russie
Moscow - Moscou

United Kingdom -
Royaume-Uni
London - Londres

non-member state of the Council of Europe (Belarus)

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