[MD] Methodology for detecting disinformation approved by media regulator

IRIS 2023-10:1/28

Andrei Richter
Comenius University (Bratislava)

Following public discussions, the Audiovisual Council (CA), the national regulatory authority in Moldova, approved in its meeting on 15 September 2023 a methodology for the detection and evaluation of cases of disinformation in audiovisual content. This methodology refers both to the need for implementation of the Republic of Moldova's Code of Audiovisual Media Services (AVMSC) in terms of counteracting disinformation on topics of public interest, as well as to the need for compliance with the EU legislation. These are the reasons for its adoption.

The evaluation of a potential case of disinformation begins whenever the CA is petitioned by anyone, including its own members. The process requires a three-stage analysis: 1) a preliminary examination of the petition; 2) a description of the context in which the case arose; 3) the application of evaluation criteria to determine whether or not the potential case constitutes disinformation and whether or not it is in breach of the AVMSC.

The third element is verified by the CA’s responsible experts by answering the following questions:

- Can the message be considered to contain elements of disinformation?

- Is the information in the message false or misleading?

- In what terms or in what words is the false or misleading information expressed?

- What facts contradict the false or misleading information?

- What are the primary sources of facts that contradict the false or misleading information?

- If there are no primary sources, what are the secondary sources of facts that contradict the false or misleading information? (At least two secondary sources should be indicated.)

- Are the primary/secondary sources sufficient to prove that the information in the message constitutes misinformation?

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

If false or misleading information is detected in the disseminated content, the analysis of the case continues with the question as to whether fact-checking organisations have published analyses that prove the false or misleading nature of the information in the disseminated message, and whether these analyses confirm the conclusions of the CA experts.

Unlike falsity, the misleading character of the content refers to information that, through equivocal, ambiguous or confusing formulations, accents, interpretations or presentation, misleads the public, abusing its good faith. According to the document, “misleading information creates in the human mind a wrong idea or impression about the facts, and the repeated dissemination of such messages leads over time to the creation of a wrong image about the facts and phenomena, reinforcing stereotypes and perpetuating prejudices”.

To determine the intent of the messenger, the CA experts are to answer the following questions:

- Is the information spread accidentally (e.g. an unintentional journalistic mistake), cyclically (during election campaigns, around important events for the state and citizens) or on a long-term basis (such as on the country’s foreign vector, public policies in key areas, reforms in the context of the European course)?

- Is the owner/final beneficiary of the audiovisual media service politically affiliated? (This can serve as an indicator of intent.)

As to whether the false or misleading information harmed or is capable of harming national security, the following four evaluation criteria taken together, if positive, point to the violation of the ban on disinformation as stated in the AVMSC:

- Does it concern national security?

- Is it intentionally aimed at national security?

- Has it already caused or is it capable of causing significant damage to national security?

- Is there a direct causal link between the damage and the spread of false or misleading information?

Metodologia privind constatarea și evaluarea cazurilor de dezinformare în conținuturile audiovizuale

https://consiliuaudiovizual.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Metodologia-privind-constatarea-si-evaluarea-cazurilor-de-dezinformare.pdf.

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

Methodology regarding the detection and evaluation of cases of disinformation in audiovisual content, approved by the Decision of the Audiovisual Council No. 285 of 15 September 2023

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026