

EDMO BELUX 2.0

Comparative analysis of EDMO BELUX 1.0 and BELUX 2.0 factchecks



EU DisinfoLab

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Executive summary

This report examines how the EDMO Belgium-Luxembourg hub's published fact-checks have covered misinformation narratives, targeted actors and referenced platforms between December 2021 and October 2025, comparing two phases of the project: EDMO BELUX 1 (9 December 2021 – 31 March 2024, 1,009 fact-checks) and EDMO BELUX 2 (2 April 2024 – 24 October 2025, 343 fact-checks), with a total of 1,352 fact-checks published by AFP, RTBF, RTL Luxembourg and DPA.

A central caveat applies throughout: these fact-checks are the subset of material the four partner organisations chose to publish through the hub, not their full verification output, and not a representative sample of it. The findings below describe what the hub's published fact-checks cover - they are not evidence of misinformation "trends" in Belgium and Luxembourg, and should not be generalised beyond the dataset without further validation against partners' full output.

Within these limits, the hub's fact-checking coverage covers multiple languages, reflecting the cross-border and multilingual nature of the region's media ecosystem. A notable share of this multilingual coverage results from translation - particularly of French-language AFP content into Luxembourgish via RTL Luxembourg - meaning some individual pieces of content are represented more than once in the dataset. This inflates the apparent weight of the narratives, actors and platforms they reference; exact duplication figures are still to be obtained. With these caveats in mind, the hub's coverage shows both continuity and adaptation to geopolitical developments across the two phases, with international leaders and institutions - such as Volodymyr Zelensky, Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump, Joe Biden, Emmanuel Macron, the WHO, the EU, the UN and the WEF - the most frequently referenced actors. The fact-checks predominantly reference large mainstream social media platforms, and references to AI-generated content have grown sharply over time. These observations point to the value of sustained and language-sensitive fact-checking monitoring, and to the need for greater methodological clarity - particularly on sampling, phase-to-phase scope changes, and cross-language duplication - before drawing broader conclusions.

Introduction

This report examines how the fact-checking activity of the EDMO Belgium-Luxembourg hub (EDMO BELUX) has addressed disinformation over more than four years, comparing two phases of the project. It draws on fact-check articles published through the hub between December 2021 and October 2025, and aims to describe recurring patterns and shifts in how the hub's fact-checkers have covered narratives, actors and platforms - not to characterise misinformation in Belgium and Luxembourg as such.

A key added value of this dataset is its coverage of fact-checking content in Luxembourgish, rarely represented in international disinformation research. Belgium's multilingual, multicultural media landscape also means disinformation narratives can circulate across French-, Dutch-, German- and English-speaking spheres, often shaped by neighbouring countries and wider transnational media ecosystems.

Collecting fact-checks over an extended period makes it possible to observe how the hub's coverage has evolved over time, rather than focusing only on short-lived viral incidents. This helps identify both persistent themes in that coverage - such as health misinformation or geopolitical conflicts - and emerging dynamics, including the growing presence of synthetic and AI-generated content.

Important caveat: the fact-checks analysed here are not equivalent to the full body of verification work carried out by AFP, RTBF, RTL Luxembourg and DPA - they are the subset each organisation chose to share through the EDMO BELUX hub. This report cannot establish whether the patterns identified reflect the actual prevalence of disinformation narratives, actors or platforms in the Belgian and Luxembourgish information space; it can only describe what this particular, partner-selected dataset shows about the hub's own fact-checking coverage. Broader claims about misinformation "trends" in Belgium and Luxembourg would require independent validation against partners' full output.

The remainder of this report first describes the dataset and analytical framework, including its limitations. It then examines the main narrative categories addressed in the hub's fact-checking

coverage, the actors most frequently referenced, and the platforms most often cited. The conclusion summarises the findings and outlines priorities for future monitoring.

Data collection and analytical framework

This analysis is based on the complete set of fact-check articles published through the EDMO Belgium-Luxembourg hub between 9 December 2021 and 24 October 2025: 1,352 fact-checks produced by AFP, RTL Luxembourg, RTBF and DPA. These are entries shared via the hub as part of partners' participation in EDMO Belux - each is also published on the originating partner's own website, and, as detailed below, some individual pieces of content appear more than once in the dataset where they were translated and published in more than one language.

The material spans two phases of the project, referred to here as Belux 1 (9 December 2021 – 31 March 2024, 1,009 fact-checks) and Belux 2 (2 April 2024 – 24 October 2025, 343 fact-checks). This division follows the project's own two successive implementation phases, rather than a time split chosen for analytical purposes; comparing them allows the report to track how the hub's published coverage evolved between one phase and the next, while flagging that the phases also differ in duration, volume, and - as noted below - in which languages and communities they cover.

The dataset records the narratives, targeted actors, and platforms referenced in each fact-check. Actors, organisations and platform references were extracted automatically from the text. Each fact-check was then manually assigned to one of ten thematic narrative categories, based on its most salient theme. Since disinformation narratives often overlap — a single fact-check might touch on both foreign politics and gender-related claims, for example — these categories were treated as mutually exclusive purely for coding purposes, as a simplification; this doesn't mean the narratives themselves are mutually exclusive in practice. Coding was cross-checked manually to keep the dataset consistent.

Language distribution - **Belux 1**: Dutch (151), English (178), French (285), German (150), Luxembourgish (245). **Belux 2**: French (133), Luxembourgish (150), German (54), English (6).

This distribution reflects both the region's multilingual media landscape and specific choices made across the two project phases. French reflects local francophone fact-checking and the wider French-language media ecosystem. Dutch-language fact-checks appear only in Belux 1: the project's second phase no longer covers Belgium's Flemish community, which is now covered separately by BENEDMO, the Dutch-language EDMO hub - this is a scope change between phases, not a disappearance of Dutch-language misinformation. German-language fact-checks reflect two distinct things: Luxembourg's proximity to the German-speaking information sphere, and the presence of a German-speaking community within Belgium itself (in the East Cantons) - DPA's inclusion as a Belux partner is tied specifically to covering this community. Luxembourgish-language fact-checks reflect domestically focused verification by RTL Luxembourg, though (as flagged below) a substantial share of these are translations of French-language content rather than distinct pieces of verification. English-language fact-checks were not intended to continue into Belux 2; the six English-language entries recorded in Belux 2 have not yet been confirmed and may reflect a data-entry oversight rather than an intentional continuation - to verify.

Finally, it should be noted that fact-checking data does not capture the entirety of disinformation circulating online. Rather, it represents claims that have generated enough controversy and have been shared widely enough to warrant verification by fact-checkers - and, more specifically, those claims that the fact-checking teams of AFP, RTBF, RTL Luxembourg and DPA have chosen to share through the EDMO Belux hub. For AFP specifically, published guidance on how subjects are selected for fact-checking is available at belux.edmo.eu/fact-checking/our-approach/, this describes AFP's own editorial process rather than a hub-wide editorial policy for EDMO Belux, and is referenced here for context only.

Limitations

- Selection, not census: the fact-checks in this dataset are those AFP, RTBF, RTL Luxembourg and DPA chose to publish via the EDMO Belux hub - not their total fact-checking output, and not demonstrated to be a representative sample of it. Findings describe the hub's published coverage, not the prevalence of misinformation itself, and

should not be generalised beyond the dataset. Some limited claims about longer-term patterns within the dataset itself remain possible, given the four-year span, but these should not be read as claims about misinformation prevalence more broadly.

- Duplication across languages: a substantial share of fact-checks - particularly in Luxembourgish - are translations of French-language originals, largely AFP content republished via RTL Luxembourg. This means some individual pieces of content appear more than once in the dataset (once per language), inflating the apparent weight of the narratives, actors and platforms they reference relative to genuinely distinct fact-checks. This also affects the language-distribution figures above: part of Luxembourgish's share reflects translation rather than independently produced verification.
- Coverage differs by phase for reasons unrelated to disinformation itself: Belux 2 excludes the Flemish community (now covered by BENEDMO) and was not intended to include English-language fact-checks. Comparisons between Belux 1 and Belux 2 should account for these scope changes, not only for changes in the misinformation landscape.
- No claim of representativeness: for the reasons above, findings should not be read as representative of misinformation circulating in Belgium and Luxembourg, nor extrapolated beyond this dataset.

EDMO Belux's coverage of disinformation narratives

This section summarises the main narrative categories addressed across the hub's fact-checking coverage in Belux 1 and Belux 2. It describes what the published fact-checks focused on in each phase - not established shifts in disinformation itself, which this dataset cannot demonstrate.

Health-related fact-checks dominated Belux 1, accounting for roughly a quarter of the coverage (26%), unsurprising given the centrality of Covid-19 during that period.

In Belux 2, foreign politics became the most frequent category (23%); combined with Ukraine- and Israel-Hamas-related coverage, geopolitical narratives accounted for a broadly stable share across both phases (37% in Belux 1, 40% in Belux 2).

Climate-related fact-checks remained stable (18% in both phases). National politics (2% to 4%) and economic issues (4% to 7%) grew modestly in Belux 2, while gender- (2% to 3%) and minority-related narratives (4%) stayed limited.

A residual "pending" category (7%) covers long-standing conspiracy theories, hoaxes and clickbait not clearly tied to a single theme. Across categories, AI-generated and synthetically manipulated content became more visible over time.

Health

Health-related fact-checks in both phases centred on Covid-19 vaccines, public health measures and pandemic-related conspiracy theories, including claims casting doubt on vaccine safety, unproven links to conditions such as autism, and promotion of unproven treatments like Ivermectin. In Belux 2, vaccine-related content became less dominant and increasingly embedded in a wider health-misinformation landscape, including AI-generated content promoting pseudo-remedies and natural-cure claims, some presenting risky practices such as self-administered colon detoxes.

Environment

Both phases addressed similar thematic pillars - climate science denial, the energy transition, environmental policy, natural disasters, and conspiracy narratives (ex: HAARP, WEF climate agendas). In Belux 1, fact-checks more often addressed outright climate denial and pseudo-scientific reasoning. In Belux 2, the coverage shifted toward content minimising or distorting the scale of climate change rather than denying it outright, alongside a marked rise in AI-generated disaster imagery and faster reframing of real-world events (ex: hurricanes, wildfires, floods) to fit misleading narratives.

Foreign politics

Core topics remained similar across both phases: electoral integrity, reputational attacks on leaders (ex: Biden, Harris), geopolitical tensions, and conspiracy narratives targeting institutions such as the WEF. The US and Russia were the most referenced countries. EU-related fact-checks in Belux 1 more often addressed claims portraying the EU as intrusive or opaque; in Belux 2, coverage shifted toward regulatory and governance debates (ex: Chat Control, the

digital euro) tied to the European Parliament elections. Synthetic media use in this category also grew over time.

War in Ukraine

Coverage was most intense in early 2022. Early fact-checks addressed decontextualised battlefield footage and attempts to obscure Russian responsibility for atrocities (e.g. Bucha). Later coverage shifted toward claims about the costs of Western support, framing of Ukraine, and the role of international organisations (NATO, UN). Coordinated influence campaigns such as Matryoshka and Doppelgänger also featured, increasingly attached to high-visibility incidents.

Israel-Hamas conflict

Following the 7 October 2023 attacks, fact-checks addressed decontextualised and AI-generated imagery presented as real-time documentation, questions about the authenticity of wartime reporting, and claims expanding the perceived scope of the conflict. Later coverage addressed international reactions, fabricated statistics, and further AI-generated visuals.

Economy

Economic misinformation appeared only sporadically in both phases. Belux 1 fact-checks addressed everyday issues such as energy prices and cost of living; Belux 2 coverage shifted toward political-fiscal claims, including misinformation about the digital euro.

Migration

Coverage remained stable across phases, recurring around claims that migrants or refugees receive preferential treatment, and anti-Muslim narratives framing migration as cultural threat (ex: claims about halal food mandates or banned music classes).

Anti-gender narratives

Belux 1 fact-checks addressed LGBTIQ+ rights and sexual-education debates, including Belgium's EVRAS law. Belux 2 coverage increasingly connected to high-profile events (ex: transphobic claims about athlete Imane Khelif) and included a newer dimension: pornographic deepfakes targeting women politicians.

Domestic politics

Volume remained comparatively limited in both countries. Belux 1 coverage often centred on symbolic figures and viral incidents (ex: Xavier Bettel); Belgian coverage addressed protests and mobilisations. Belux 2 coverage shifted toward disputes between political figures (ex: Magonne, Bouchez, De Wever) and contested statistics on governance topics.

Background noise

A residual category covers long-standing hoaxes, celebrity rumours and scams present throughout both phases, with Belux 2 showing a stronger technological dimension via AI-generated visuals.

Actors and institutions referenced in EDMO Belux fact-checks

Within this dataset, the actors most frequently referenced by the hub's fact-checks are a relatively stable set: major geopolitical leaders, international institutions, and - less often - national political figures. Their recurrence reflects the international news agenda covered by the hub's fact-checks, within the limits of this dataset.

Volodymyr Zelensky and Vladimir Putin feature prominently in fact-checks tied to the war in Ukraine. Donald Trump and Joe Biden appear in coverage of electoral integrity and economic claims. Emmanuel Macron is the most referenced European leader, reflecting the influence of French political debates on the fact-checks published in the Belgian information ecosystem - an illustration of the cross-border spread of narratives from larger neighbouring media environments into the hub's coverage.

International institutions and public authorities are also frequently referenced - the WHO and pharmaceutical companies in Covid-19-era coverage, and the EU, UN and WEF in narratives framing supranational governance as a threat or promoting hidden agendas. Domestic figures appear less often overall, though Luxembourg's and Belgium's prime ministers (Xavier Bettel,

Alexander De Croo) recur in scam-related fact-checks involving fabricated commercial endorsements.

Platforms referenced in EDMO Belux fact-checks

To identify the platforms most often referenced in the hub's fact-checks, 50% of the dataset was randomly sampled and analysed (505 entries for Belux 1, 172 for Belux 2). References were extracted automatically and cross-checked manually. Because they are drawn from a 50% random sample rather than the full dataset, the resulting counts should be read as indicative of broader patterns, not as an exhaustive tally of every platform reference across all 1,352 fact-checks.

Belux 1 (505 entries)	Belux 2 (172 entries)
Facebook - 385 mentions	Facebook - 136 mentions
X/Twitter - 302 mentions	Instagram - 62 mentions
Telegram - 147 mentions	TikTok - 46 mentions
Instagram - 111 mentions	YouTube - 44 mentions
YouTube - 108 mentions	Telegram - 32 mentions

Across both phases, the fact-checks most often referenced mainstream platforms - Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok - all designated Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) under the EU Digital Services Act. This is consistent with the dataset's focus on claims circulating on social media, though it cannot indicate where a claim originally emerged or how it spread across platforms. It is also worth noting, as context for Facebook's prominence specifically, that Meta funds third-party fact-checking organisations through its fact-checking partner programme - a relevant factor when interpreting why Facebook content is so consistently and heavily represented in fact-checkers' own published output.

Telegram appeared regularly as a secondary channel; WhatsApp appeared rarely, likely reflecting the difficulty of observing content in encrypted environments rather than its absence - and, unlike VLOPs, neither is subject to DSA transparency obligations, limiting systematic monitoring. References to Russian state-affiliated outlets (RT, Sputnik) were largely

confined to BELUX 1, consistent with EU sanctions restricting their distribution from 2022 onward; their narratives may still circulate indirectly via reposts, screenshots or translated excerpts.

The core set of mainstream platforms referenced remains broadly similar between the two phases, though not unchanged: X/Twitter was the second most referenced platform in Belux 1 (302 mentions) but does not appear among the five most-referenced platforms in Belux 2, where TikTok enters the ranking instead. Whether this reflects an actual shift in where disinformation circulates, a change in what fact-checkers chose to reference, or a sampling effect cannot be determined from this dataset alone.

Findings and future monitoring priorities

This longitudinal analysis of the EDMO Belux hub's fact-checking coverage underlines the value of sustained, language-sensitive monitoring: the four-year dataset makes it possible to observe patterns not visible in short-term snapshots, and the inclusion of Luxembourgish-language fact-checks addresses a linguistic community rarely covered in international disinformation research. Within the hub's coverage, some narrative categories - health, environment, migration - remained comparatively stable across both phases, while foreign-political narratives grew more prominent in Belux 2, tracking major geopolitical events. A growing presence of synthetic and AI-generated content was visible across nearly every category.

These observations describe the hub's published coverage and should not be read as established trends in disinformation circulating in Belgium and Luxembourg.