



A Solution-Oriented Approach to Combatting Disinformation as a Fuel to Ethno-Political Radicalization

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Disinformation in Kosovo is not incidental but deliberately manufactured by domestic and foreign actors alike. Through tailored, divisionist narratives, hostile propaganda, and the amplification of historic grievances, disinformation exacerbates divisions between communities in Kosovo, especially ethnic Albanians and ethnic Serbs. Further, it radicalizes public opinion and undermines the Normalization Dialogue with Serbia. In September 2025, KCSS published a report on [How Disinformation Fuels Ethno-Political Radicalization, authored by Paçarizi, Ilazi and Pallasch](#), developed under the DISRUPT project. The study draws on a mixed methodological approach, combining social media monitoring, interviews with civil society actors and case studies of key incidents to explore how strategically engineered falsehoods undermine trust, polarize communities, and harden ethnic identities. The following points critically mark feasible steps towards combatting disinformation, based on the findings of the 2025 report.

1 **Establishing a Systematic Fact-Checking Ecosystem.** Kosovo's government should channel resources toward establishing and sustaining fact-checking mechanisms, while shielding them

from political capture. Currently, Kosovo lacks a robust institutional infrastructure for monitoring and debunking falsehoods with an impactful reach across ethnic lines. A priority should therefore be the creation of an

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independently resourced fact-checking ecosystem, co-financed by state grants and international donors while governed autonomously, ensuring credibility. Funding streams could be competitively allocated and conditioned on adherence to transparency benchmarks such as open-source methodologies, multi-lingual accessibility, and non-partisan editorial boards. At the same time, government ministries must refrain from monopolizing counter-disinformation work, since excessive state control risks collapsing fact-checking into propaganda, especially as state institutions themselves have, at times, produced selective or ethnically charged narratives that blur the line between truth and disinformation. Independence is therefore indispensable not only to maintain public trust but also to ensure scrutiny extends to state actors when they are the source of distortion. To achieve impact, these mechanisms should explicitly avoid mono-ethnic perspectives. Both Kosovo Albanians and Serbs are targets of disinformation, albeit differently, and fact-checking services need to reflect that asymmetry with dual- or even multi-lingual outputs produced in cooperation and simultaneously. Government support can therefore best serve as an enabler, not a content producer, by providing financial stability, facilitating access to official records, and allowing fact-checking professionals to operate freely and support in debunking disinformation concerning issues of national interest, such as the Normalization Process. Given this mandate, the government must also legislate safeguards against retaliatory lawsuits that could be weaponized to prosecute or even silence fact-checkers. At the same time, legal safeguards should ensure that investigative findings exposing disinformation, even when implicating

government institutions, cannot be curbed through political pressure.

2 Civil Society: Multiethnic and Bilingual Fact-Checking. Civil society and fact-checking organizations occupy a pivotal role in countering disinformation since they are often more trusted across community lines than government actors. Consequently, there is a need for civil society-led initiatives targeted to counter disinformation that consciously embed multiethnic participation. Concretely, this means fact-checking teams that are not only bilingual in communication but also ethnically diverse in membership. This aids a more trustworthy reception of the work to be not perceived as externalized or imposed, but as credible and representative. Bilingualism in publication is central – false claims targeting Albanians about Serb aggression, or framing Serbs as perpetual victims, need to be simultaneously debunked in both languages, allowing communities to see how mirror narratives function. Civil society should also lead at the community level, organizing workshops that train teachers, activists, and local leaders in basic verification techniques. Empowering citizens to engage in fact-checking builds resilience from the bottom up.

3 Media Monitoring Collaboration between Ethnicities. Research stresses that Kosovo lacks credible platforms trusted across ethnic lines, which allows polarized narratives to flourish unchecked. To address this vacuum, civil society organizations or the Journalist’s Association should establish a joint Albanian-Serb media monitoring coalition. Such a body would be tasked with monitoring both Albanian and Serbian-language outlets, cataloguing disinformation trends, spotlighting malign influences, and publishing findings

simultaneously in both languages. The reports should be publicly accessible and distributed online to ensure visibility beyond elite policymaking circles. Over time, consistent transparency gradually builds accountability and reduces the ability of outlets that repeatedly spread falsehoods to present themselves as impartial or trustworthy. Beyond cataloguing disinformation, the coalition should invest in narrative-building efforts, adopting a proactive stance in highlighting counter-narratives. Stories of cooperation, shared struggles, and lived multiethnicity, such as through short documentaries, podcasts, and photo-stories, can tackle the absence of alternative storytelling in mainstream media. Like this, nuance can be injected into echo chambers, dominated by alarm and hostility, undermining the appeal of polarizing narratives. To build credibility, the coalition must be clearly independent and avoid perceptions of bias by either community or the government.

4 Raising Editorial Standards in the Media. Clear responsibility must be placed on Kosovo’s media organizations. Many outlets, though not engaged in deliberate propaganda, fall into one-sided sourcing, reliance on official statements, or sensationalist framings of interethnic incidents. This inadvertently reinforces polarized perceptions. Consequently, stronger editorial standards must be implemented, including mandatory multi-community sourcing in any report regarding ethnic tensions, explicit distinctions between fact and opinion, and rigorous, critical, and systematic fact-checking mechanisms. Claims describing incidents as “staged events”, often repeated without hard evidence, must not be published without corroboration. Media outlets further need to invest in newsroom skills training to adapt to the realities of

disinformation as a professional challenge. For example, planning dedicated “verification slots” within reporting workflows and signing content-sharing agreements with independent fact-checking organisations would enhance reliability. In addition, updated codes of ethics should clearly prohibit the amplification of unverified or ethnically charged narratives, with enforcement mechanisms that hold editors accountable for compliance. Professional self-regulation, guided by these codes, must set a uniform standard of accuracy, impartiality, and accountability as the baseline duty of any media outlet.

5 Update Kosovo’s National Security Strategy. Given the pivotal role of disinformation in ethnically divided societies and its recent impact in undermining the Normalization Process, [Kosovo’s National Security Strategy \(2022-2027\)](#) must position disinformation as a distinct strategic category. At present, the strategy references disinformation only in passing, diluting the seriousness and impact of the challenge. Yet, as the report demonstrates, disinformation functions not merely as a communication irritant but as a structural threat multiplier, fueling ethnic radicalization, undermining normalization dialogue, and weakening Euro-Atlantic integration efforts. Explicit recognition in the strategy would mandate ministries to develop disinformation response plans, budget lines, and performance indicators. Similarly, the [National Cyber Security Strategy \(2023-2027\)](#) must evolve to include prevention and rapid reaction to disinformation alongside classic cybersecurity concerns, such as malware or hacking. Established in 2023, the Cyber Security Agency, with proper resourcing, should house a dedicated counter-disinformation unit tasked with monitoring narratives across the

information ecosystem, issuing alerts, and facilitating partnerships with civil society fact-checkers. Integrating disinformation into the formal national security framework elevates it from a fragmented challenge to a recognized security priority, giving institutions both the mandate and accountability needed to invest systematically in countermeasures.

6 Municipal-Level Crisis Communication Team. Communication capacity should not only be national but also localized. Particularly in multiethnic regions, the establishment of municipal-level crisis communications teams would allow for immediate intervention when incidents emerge. These should be multi-ethnic teams trained in rapid response, equipped with bilingual staff, and integrated into broader security coordination mechanisms. During incidents, outrage could be tackled and contained before it spills over into the media and online realm, where the information risks taking on a life of its own, becoming uncontrolled. Municipal teams also need to be digitally literate in order to engage directly on the social media platforms popular in their communities. This not only allows them to communicate effectively but also deepens their understanding of the public they serve and the narratives shaping perceptions, enabling more empathetic and targeted interventions. Civil society can support these efforts by offering training and toolkits, but institutional ownership must come from mayors' offices and municipal assemblies. By reinforcing communication where tensions arise, at the community level, Kosovo has the potential to counter the disinformation infrastructure proactively by bringing integrity into those spaces where mistrust grows fastest.

7 Bilingual Representation at the Political Level. Another substantive intervention lies in strengthening representation with government communication. Appointing a Kosovo Serb as one of the official government spokespersons, while requiring all ministries to designate Serbian-speaking media officers, would provide more credible and inclusive communication channels. This measure is not symbolic but a practical necessity for improving transparency, ensuring that Serbian-speaking audiences receive timely and direct information rather than delayed translations or mediated interpretations. Such an approach would reduce the space for state-aligned external outlets to dominate the narrative among Kosovo Serbs and would simultaneously signal inclusivity to both domestic and international audiences. Municipal governments in mixed areas should mirror this practice by maintaining accessible spokespeople who can communicate decisions in both languages, particularly during crises. Bilingual representation thus transforms state communication into a bridge rather than a barrier, closing off a powerful disinformation pathway at its source.