



DISICON  
INFORMATION INTEGRITY CONFERENCE

# UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO GENDERED DISINFORMATION

6<sup>th</sup> Edition  
-7 December, 2023



**223,475**  
TOTAL VIEWS AND INTERACTIONS



**128,393**  
VIEWS AND INTERACTIONS  
ON FACEBOOK



**13,357**  
VIEWS AND INTERACTIONS  
ON LINKDIN



**15,139**  
VIEWS AND INTERACTIONS  
ON INSTAGRAM



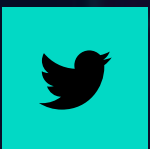
**300**  
IN-PERSON PARTICIPANTS



**33,307**  
VIEWS ON YOUTUBE



**25**  
WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS



**34,447**  
VIEWS AND INTERACTIONS  
ON TWITTER



**8**  
TV CHANNEL COVERAGE

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**01**

Summary

**02**

Opening Remarks

**03**

Panel Discussion - Gender, Politics, and Disinformation

**04**

Presentation - Gendered Disinformation in Kosovo

**05**

Panel Discussion - Ensuring a Safe, Inclusive, and Equal Media Environment

**06**

Disistory

**07**

Remarks

**08**

Keynote Discussion

**09**

Disistory

**10**

Panel Discussion - Inclusivity in the Tech Industry: Opportunities and Challenges

**11**

Closing Remarks

**12**

Moving forward to building alliances in combating gendered disinformation

**13**

DISIConnect - Kosovo Tech Industry Meets Big Tech

**14**

DISICONNECT

**15**

DISIConnect - Information Integrity Forum meeting with META

**16**

DISIConnect - Regional Information Integrity Forum (RIIF)

**17**

DISIConnect - Information Integrity Academy - 3rd module

**18**

DISIConnect - Session with cybersecurity students

**19**

DISIConnect - Political Polarization: Information Disorders as means for division

# Summary

The 6th edition of the Information Integrity Conference DISICON centered around the theme "**Understanding and Responding to Gendered Disinformation.**" Gendered disinformation, defined as the strategic use of false information to manipulate gender dynamics, targets women and seeks to influence political outcomes. To address this issue, NDI organized its sixth Information Integrity Conference, (DISICON-6), the largest platform of information integrity in the Balkans around the topic of gendered disinformation which was held on December 6-7, 2023 in Pristina, Kosovo. DISICON-6 brought together local, regional, and international experts to discuss the urgency of information integrity in the region, the challenges of gendered disinformation, and balancing the protection of human rights. The event aimed to shed light on the potential consequences of gendered disinformation campaigns and explore effective strategies to mitigate this growing threat.

For the first time, DISICON did not have a human moderator, with an AI moderator taking the helm. This innovative approach underscored the evolving role of technology in facilitating discussions on complex issues. Representatives from Meta engaged with participants from Kosovo and the Western Balkans, contributing insights on Meta's transparency tools and the impact of AI on their strategies to combat gendered disinformation. A significant highlight of this edition was the launch of a comprehensive report on gender disinformation in Kosovo, shedding light on the specific challenges faced by women and LGBTQ+ individuals in the social and online media platforms. DISICON was also featured on Forbes, with Sarah Oh sharing insights on her experience at DISICON. You can read Sarah Oh's column here: "[What The ChatGPT Store Means For AI Accessibility.](#)"

The conference introduced DISI-CONNECT, a novel framework under the DISICON umbrella, fostering workshops, networking, and learning opportunities. This initiative brought together international guests, experts and local stakeholders to explore collaborative efforts in combating gendered disinformation. DISICON's objectives included raising awareness about the impact of gendered disinformation, providing insights into the evolving landscape of disinformation and technology, and fostering cross-border collaboration. The ultimate goal was to develop actionable recommendations for policymakers, tech companies, civil society, and other stakeholders, promoting a more inclusive and equal media environment.

# OPENING REMARKS

Ambassador Nancy Soderberg, Senior Country Director, NDI Kosovo



The 6th edition of the Information Integrity Conference - DISICON-6 - kicked off with opening remarks delivered by NDI's Kosovo Senior Country Director Ambassador Nancy Soderberg. DISICON's mission, as Ambassador Soderberg conveyed, is to raise awareness, deepen understanding and respond to information disorders, and while doing so, implement effective countermeasures to ensure a more inclusive, safer, and fair media environment for all. Ambassador Soderberg recognized and applauded the work of D4D's report which was launched during DISICON, providing a comprehensive review of social and online media monitoring of attacks against women in politics and leadership, highlighting the urgency of understanding gendered disinformation as it deeply influences inclusive and democratic participation. In conclusion, Ambassador Soderberg thanked all participants, encouraging active contributions for a successful conference with a lasting impact on crucial issues. Soderberg concluded by expressing collective commitment to creating an environment free from violence, assisting Kosovo's institutions in fortifying their information systems, and extending gratitude to all participants for contributing to the conference's success.

## Key takeaways:

- **The profound impact of gendered disinformation on Kosovo's political landscape** was emphasized, highlighting the critical necessity to acknowledge and address this issue given its significant influence on shaping perceptions and the overall political environment.
- **The significance lies in establishing inclusive political spaces** by tackling gendered disinformation and online violence. There's a collective responsibility to ensure that political environments are safe, fair, and accessible to all.

# OPENING REMARKS

Nuno Queirós, UNDP Resident Representative in Kosovo



Nuno Queirós, in his opening remarks, acknowledged the rapid advancements in technology, citing the introduction of ChatGPT and other apps in the last two years as both exciting and alarming. While fast access to information has democratized society, there is a proliferation of disinformation masking the truth, capable of polarizing societies with fragile social cohesion. Queirós emphasized the alarming trend of using social media to shame and attack women and young girls. He stressed UNDP's position to advocate and take action for the benefit of the entire society. Queirós expressed concern about misogyny, pointing out that 90% of hate speech used against women originates from men, which he deemed as unacceptable. Queirós called for solutions and urged participants to strive for a fair media environment irrespective of gender or background. The ultimate goal, Queirós asserted, should be to create recommendations for actors to combat gendered online violence, committing collectively to the pursuit of truth and inclusivity.

## Key takeaways:

- **Impact of technology and disinformation in democratic and social cohesion.** Queirós acknowledged the need to address the rapid changes in how we communicate with each other, and expressed his concern about democracies keeping up with technological advancements.
- **Urgency to address gendered disinformation and online violence,** calling for collective solutions and the creation of recommendations to combat gendered online violence. The ultimate goal, as asserted by Queirós, is to foster a fair media environment, encouraging inclusivity and the pursuit of truth.

# OPENING REMARKS

AnnaCarin Platon, Head of European Integration, Political, Press and Information Section, EU Office in Kosovo



AnnaCarin Platon acknowledged the unfortunate reality that women from diverse backgrounds experience in online and social media. Platon emphasized that there is a disproportionate online violence that women in positions of power often face, that their male counterparts do not encounter. Platon drew specific attention to the detrimental impact of online hate speech and smear campaigns on women, emphasizing the urgent need to address this pervasive issue. Highlighting the global nature of the challenge, Platon asserted that the fine line between freedom of expression and discrimination is not unique to Kosovo but extends internationally. Within the EU's broader efforts, Platon underscored their support for the recent study titled "Story of Our Lives," emphasizing its role in shedding light on disinformation and providing actionable recommendations for Kosovo institutions in dealing with false and misleading news. The study also identified capacity gaps within focus groups and various segments of Kosovo society, emphasizing the imperative for enhanced capabilities to identify misinformation. Platon stressed the significance of collective action, advocating for proactive fact-checking before sharing information. She emphasized the crucial roles of both leaders and information consumers in combating disinformation. Additionally, Platon outlined EU measures, including the establishment of the EU StratCom Task Force and the creation of a rapid alert system. Addressing online violence against women is a key objective, and Platon called for collective efforts from government, civil society, and the public in effectively tackling this issue. Expressing gratitude to NDI for organizing the conference, Platon underscored the importance of forums like these in advancing the public discussion and gendered disinformation impact on democracies.

## Key takeaways:

- **The widespread challenge women face in online spaces**, emphasizing the urgent need to address gendered disinformation, especially affecting women in positions of power.
- **The importance of collective action**, proactive fact-checking, and involvement from leaders and information consumers is essential to fighting gendered disinformation.

# Panel Discussion - Gender, Politics, and Disinformation



In a crucial panel discussion on Gender, Politics, and Disinformation, Moira Whelan, Director of Democracy and Technology at NDI, highlighted gender disinformation as a formidable threat to democracy. With insights from NDI's work across 50 countries, she emphasized how online harassment hampers women's participation in public life, posing a significant obstacle to vibrant democracies, particularly impacting women politicians and journalists. The discussion centered around the role of journalists in shaping news consumption and called for a shift in narrative responsibility from women to the perpetrators of gender disinformation, often operating at high levels of power. Moira Whelan advocated for viewing women as valuable resources, exceeding 50% of the world's human resources, and called for effective utilization of these resources for societal progress. Jennifer Adams, Council of Europe Expert, expanded on the historical context, expressing concern about technology exacerbating existing power dynamics and inequalities on a global scale. During audience interaction, the need to invest in media literacy and collaborate with civil society to transform gendered disinformation narratives faced by women was highlighted. Jennifer Adams defined gendered disinformation as an umbrella term encompassing various forms of gender-based violence discouraging public and political participation. The discussion concluded with a call for ongoing efforts in media literacy, policy development, and a grassroots mindset shift to effectively combat gender disinformation.

## Key takeaways:

- **Gender disinformation as a significant threat to democracy**, underscoring the hindrance caused by online harassment, leading to women's reluctance to participate in public life, thereby impeding the development of vibrant democracies. The disproportionate impact on female politicians and journalists was a focal point of concern.
- **Growing global awareness on gendered disinformation** and the importance of solutions originating from the global majority - women. The discussion stressed the necessity for ongoing efforts in media literacy, policy development, and grassroots mindset shifts to combat gender disinformation effectively.



# Presentation - Gendered Disinformation in Kosovo



Rezarta Delibashzade-Krasniqi, Executive Director of Democracy for Development (D4D), with the support of National Democratic Institute NDI, United States Agency for International Development USAID and United Nations Development Programme in Kosovo UNDP and Pikasa Analytics worked on the "[UNSOCIAL MEDIA](#)," report, marking a significant milestone in the active monitoring of social and online media within the Kosovo media landscape. This report represents a groundbreaking effort, being the first of its kind, to trace and detect social and online media monitoring for the identification of gendered disinformation in Kosovo media environment. Among other important findings, this report has found disproportionate targeting based on gender and sexual orientation, especially those in the public eye like politicians, as a common phenomenon of disinformation campaigns and online violence. Such campaigns damage the credibility of women leaders, potentially influencing public perception and election outcomes. Online violence and harassment, marked by sexist and misogynistic comments, are more prevalent for women and LGBTQI+ persons, particularly on social media, and may negatively affect their mental well-being. This comprehensive report, a culmination of months of social and online media monitoring, particularly focused on unraveling the complexities of gendered disinformation prevalent in the Kosovo media environment. D4D's systematic monitoring efforts were designed to provide not just a surface-level understanding but also a nuanced insight into the dynamics of gendered disinformation in Kosovo. This monitoring initiative holds immense importance as it unveils patterns, identifies trends, and highlights potential threats associated with gendered disinformation.

The information derived from these efforts provides a cornerstone for building awareness, comprehending the challenges faced by various segments of the population, and crafting effective strategies to counteract disinformation. Beyond showcasing the current state of gendered disinformation in Kosovo, the presentation also played a pivotal role in advancing ongoing endeavors to cultivate a media environment characterized by fairness, inclusivity, and accountability. As a valuable resource, it provides a robust foundation for policymakers, civil society, and other stakeholders engaged in addressing the specific challenges posed by gendered disinformation in the region. This report stands as a testament to the dedication and significance of efforts aimed at deciphering and combatting disinformation in today's media landscape.

## Key takeaways:

- **Gender disparity in online violence and harassment:** Women encounter online violence and harassment more frequently from men than from women (men make up 89.6% of hate speech comments and women 10.4%). When segregating the data based on gender from all comments in the articles, it became evident that men exhibited a higher degree of engagement in online violence and harassment directed at women.
- **Higher engagement on gendered disinformation content:** Gendered disinformation news articles in the media generate significantly higher engagement compared to overall news articles. On average, the gendered disinformation cases in the media garner over 86 reactions per news—three times higher than the typical engagement for all news.
- **Intentional Targeting:** Women, especially those in the public eye such as politicians and public figures, are often targeted by disinformation campaigns in comparison to men.
- **Undermining Credibility:** Disinformation campaigns frequently undermine the credibility of women in positions of leadership. This could bring consequences, affecting public perception and potentially influencing electoral outcomes.
- **Online violence and harassment:** Women and LGBTQI+ persons experience higher levels of online harassment, including sexist and misogynistic and hate speech comments. Social media platforms are common spaces for such harassment, impacting the mental health and well-being of the targeted individuals.
- **Intersectionality Challenges:** From the intersectional perspective, women who are also from the non-majority communities in Kosovo, face heightened disinformation campaigns exploiting multiple dimensions of their identity, such as race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.
- **Political Polarization:** Gendered disinformation is contributing to political polarization by fostering a hostile online environment in Kosovo. This can harm inclusivity in democracy and can deter women and LGBTQI+ persons from entering politics or engaging in public discourse, limiting their participation in civic and public life.
- **Online backlash:** Notable online attack on women public figures who decide to oppose their male counterparts. Women who question or challenge their male colleagues experience pronounced social media attacks.

# Panel Discussion - Ensuring a Safe, Inclusive, and Equal Media Environment



In a dynamic panel discussion titled "Ensuring a Safe, Inclusive, and Equal Media Environment," the panelists discussed the key challenges and initiatives surrounding gender representation and issues within the media environment in Kosovo. Muhamet Hajrullahu, Editor in Chief at Telegrafi emphasized the challenges in advancing major issues in politics and media. He underscored the importance of increased representation of women in various fields, sharing his personal efforts to ensure gender balance in his everyday work such as in interviews and podcasts. Tatjana Lazarević, Editor in Chief at KoSSev, shed light on the challenges faced by women journalists in the north of Kosovo, highlighting the difficulties experienced during tensions in the north, and the difficulties in reporting from conflict areas. Lazarević emphasized prevalent misogyny and discriminatory practices, sharing her personal experience of being targeted after reporting on events in the north. Agon Maliqi, Policy Analyst and Activist addressed the normalization of gender issues in the media, stressing the need to shift the focus onto perpetrators rather than blaming women when they become victims. He highlighted challenges faced by women in televised political panels, emphasizing the role of patriarchy in perpetuating oppressive norms for men.

Donika Emini, Executive Director at Civi-Kos, joined the discussion online and shared her experiences as a public figure affected by gender-related phenomena in Kosovo. She emphasized the challenges of being the only woman on most of the panel discussions she has been invited to, and emphasized that this needs to change. Imer Mushkolaj, Executive Director at Press Council of Kosovo, discussed issues related to televised discussions, raising concerns about intentional gender bias from political parties. He urged parties to increase women 10 representation, emphasizing the need for proactive steps to give women more opportunities in political debates. The panelists collectively highlighted the importance of addressing these challenges to foster a more inclusive and equal media environment in Kosovo.

## Key takeaways:

- **The normalization of gender issues in the media is a concerning trend.** The discussion emphasized the importance of shifting the focus onto perpetrators rather than blaming women when they become victims. This takeaway reflects a call to reframe the narrative and address the root causes of gender-related challenges in the media.
- **Intentional gender bias in televised discussions,** urging political parties to take proactive steps to increase female representation. This key takeaway emphasizes the need for deliberate efforts to provide women with more opportunities to participate in political debates, contributing to a more inclusive and equal media environment.

# DISISTORY

Resilience and Empowerment Against Online Violence

Aulonë Kadriu, Senior Editor, Kosovo 2.0, Kosovo



Aulonë Kadriu, Senior Editor at Kosovo 2.0 delivered a powerful Disistory, intertwining activism and journalism to illuminate stories of resilience and empowerment against online violence targeting women and the LGBTQI+ community. In her personal narrative, Kadriu highlighted the transformative power of language as a tool to combat patriarchal structures. She emphasized the significance of listening as a process through which individuals harness the power of words to articulate their experiences, particularly in a society where women are often excluded from 11 conversations. Despite facing challenges, Kadriu underscored the crucial role of words, especially in contexts where women lack representation in politics and discussions. The Disistory shed light on the roots of issues like online violence and discrimination within homes and families, permeating into broader spaces like media, schools, parliament, and the job market. Kadriu stressed the need to name and describe these problems for effective resolution. As an activist and journalist, Kadriu expressed her commitment to standing with those often silenced. She highlighted the necessity of finding the right words for justice causes, addressing linguistic injustices imposed on marginalized communities. In her work at Kosovo 2.0, Kadriu focuses on amplifying the voices of those whose language has been stolen, emphasizing the responsibility of using language with care and love to speak the truth without perpetuating homophobia and sexism.

## Key takeaways:

- **The importance and transformative power of language** as a crucial tool in combating patriarchal structures. She emphasizes the significance of listening and harnessing the power of words, especially in societies where women are often excluded from conversations. Kadriu's narrative highlights how language becomes an empowering force for individuals to articulate their experiences and challenge societal norms.
- **The importance of naming and identifying** these problems as a crucial step towards effective resolution. Her commitment as an activist and journalist to stand with those often silenced reflects the necessity of finding the right words for justice causes and addressing linguistic injustices imposed on marginalized communities. The key takeaway is the imperative of using language with care and love to amplify the voices of the marginalized and speak the truth without perpetuating homophobia and sexism.

# REMARKS

U.S. Ambassador to Kosovo, Ambassador Jeffrey M. Hovenier



Ambassador Jeffrey M. Hovenier expressed his delight at joining the conference and extended his thanks to the National Democratic Institute for hosting DISICON. Highlighting the unique introduction by artificial intelligence, he emphasized the crucial theme of understanding and countering gender-based and LGBTQI disinformation as essential for building robust democracies and championing human rights. Underlining the foundation of peace, stability, and security in democratic societies, Ambassador Hovenier asserted the necessity of ensuring the safe, free, and equal participation of women and marginalized groups in public life. Ambassador Hovenier pointed out the potential for disinformation to be wielded as a weapon to stifle critics and consolidate power, particularly by sidelining women and marginalized individuals from the political arena. The spread of false narratives attacking their character, morality, and dignity acts as a significant deterrent to their political engagement. Acknowledging global strides in women's representation, Ambassador Hovenier called for more improvements. He highlighted the collective responsibility to thwart bad-faith actors exploiting disinformation to target women, LGBTQI+ individuals, and minority groups for political gain. Drawing insights from recent NDI polling, Ambassador Hovenier shared that a majority of Kosovo citizens support equal representation of women and men in political parties, recognizing the discouraging impact of online harassment on women politicians' political participation. In his role as the personal representative of the President of the United States to Kosovo, Ambassador Hovenier assured staunch U.S. support in combating gender-based disinformation. He emphasized the imperative of coordination and cooperation among diverse actors, including 13 government, the private sector, media, civil society, and other influential entities, to effectively address the challenges posed by disinformation. Ambassador Hovenier concluded by anticipating President Osmani's upcoming speech, expressing the belief that women leaders illuminate a path for the next generation despite the challenges they face. He extended gratitude to the participants for their unwavering commitment to this important cause.

## Key takeaways:

- **Working together** to stop bad faith actors from seeking political gain by attacking women LGBTQI+ individuals and minority groups, for their own political gain.
- **Without safe, free and equal participation** of women and all marginalized groups, neither the United States nor Kosovo nor any other democratic society around the world can have peace, stability, or security.

# Keynote Discussion



President Vjosa Osmani of Kosovo in conversation with renowned journalist Mira Kazhani, explored the challenges that women face in politics and how the media's portrayals impact women's ambition to join politics and hold leadership positions. President Osmani shared her 14 experiences, addressing the pressing issue of rising misogyny. She highlighted the unique perspectives women bring to politics and called for combating stereotypes. Emphasizing the need for increased women's representation and in recognizing women's advocacy for social issues, President Osmani urged collaborative efforts to fight gender-based disinformation, underlining the importance of raising collective awareness to counteract normalized online violence. The discussion also touched on the relationship between politicians and the media, with President Osmani expressing concern about media contributions to disinformation and emphasizing the media's responsibility to resist information disorders. Drawing on international examples, she underscored the necessity for collective action to address broader societal challenges. In summary, the conversation revealed the hurdles faced by women in politics, the powerful influence of media on political narratives, and the essential need for collective action to combat disinformation for a healthier political and societal environment.

## Key takeaways:

- **Empowering women's ambition** for politics rather than side-lining them from joining politics. Emphasizing the importance of increasing women's representation to challenge those in decision-making tables.
- **Collective efforts against disinformation** to combat gender-based disinformation. President Osmani urged for heightened responses and collaboration, with men actively supporting the cause.



The second disistory of DISICON conference was delivered by Mira Kazhani, Founder of Tirana Post, Albania. Kazhani shared her powerful experience as a woman journalist and her views on women's representation and portrayal in the media. Kazhani underscored that the role of a journalist transcends typical 9-5 expectations, and must continually strive to maintain the accuracy and integrity of the information they deliver to the public. Kazhani shared her own journey from aspiring journalist to hosting one of Albania's most influential podcasts, highlighting the relentless dedication required. Moreover, she noted the additional challenge faced by women journalists, who often shoulder disproportionate responsibilities for family care alongside their professional duties, amplifying the difficulty of their roles.

## Key takeaways:

- **Importance of women's representation** and portrayal in the media, emphasizing the need for diverse voices and perspectives in journalism. Kazhani's experience as a woman journalist underscores the importance of creating spaces where women's voices are heard and valued.
- **Demanding nature of journalism, particularly for women**, who must navigate both professional responsibilities and disproportionate family care duties while striving to uphold the integrity of information in the media.

# Panel Discussion - Inclusivity in the Tech Industry: Opportunities and Challenges



In a discussion moderated by Jeta Xharra, Executive Director at Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), the panel explored inclusivity within the tech industry. Oskar Braszczyński, Government & Politics Partner at META emphasized the importance and responsibility of big tech companies in behavior observation and the use of generative AI for content detection, and policy updates, including content labeling for manipulated media. Braszczyński highlighted the success of transparency policies and the introduction of ads library in Kosovo, which can be used to ensure election preparedness and firefighting mechanisms. In addition, Sarah Oh focused on gender abuse in the tech industry, addressing challenges in dealing with 'soft social issues' like gender. She emphasized holistic comprehension, identified a gap in resources for flagging gendered hate speech, and explored the dynamic interplay between online and offline hate speech. Oh also discussed the intersection of conservative ideologies and hate speech, questioning the boundaries of free speech. Akilnathan Logeswaran highlighted challenges by META in dealing with online violence, advocating for more proactive platform measures. He stressed the importance of AI tools to detect and address harmful content. Logeswaran also discussed the significance of trademark violations in addressing content issues and criticized slow processes within the big tech companies. The panel discussion underscored the necessity for proactive measures and effective enforcement to combat online content inciting violence and violating community standards.

## Key takeaways:

- **The critical need for proactive measures**, including the use of AI, to effectively combat online content that incites violence. It also underscored the ongoing challenges in enforcing community standards, emphasizing the importance of adapting to new nuances and gray zones on digital platforms.
- **Exploring further the role of generative AI** in content detection to the challenges of combating gender abuse in the tech industry.



# Closing remarks

Tankut Soykan, Deputy Head of the Council of Europe Office in Pristina



Closing remarks for this edition were delivered by Tankut Soykan, Deputy Head of the Council of Europe Office in Pristina and Ambassador Nancy Soderberg, Senior Country Director, NDI, Kosovo. Soykan reiterated the Council of Europe's dedication to combating gender discrimination, specifically within disinformation campaigns. The Council of Europe's approach involves intergovernmental activities and standards-setting through the Gender Equality Commission, operational support for national implementation, and gender mainstreaming across all sectors. Soykan underscored the strategic alignment with human rights and the rule of law commitments in addressing disinformation challenges. Ambassador Soderberg concluded the conference highlighting the pressing issue of online attacks on women hindering political participation. The conference concluded during the 16 Days of Activism, emphasizing the broader context of efforts against violence on women. Ambassador Soderberg urged continued efforts to combat challenges faced by women, especially in the online space, applauding all contributors for a successful and impactful day at DISICON 6th edition.

## Key takeaways:

- **The commitment of the Council of Europe to combat gendered disinformation**, particularly within disinformation campaigns, through intergovernmental activities, standards-setting via the Gender Equality Commission, and gender mainstreaming across sectors is crucial.
- **The urgent issue of online attacks on women impeding political participation**, especially during the 16 Days of Activism, stressing the importance of continued efforts to address challenges faced by women in the online space.

# Moving forward to building alliances in combating gendered disinformation



The workshop on combating gendered disinformation aimed to foster collaboration and strategize effective measures for addressing the pervasive issue of misleading information affecting individuals based on gender. Hosted by Jennifer Adams, Council of Europe Expert the workshop raised several questions for debate, including why gendered disinformation is a global issue deserving attention and resources, the role of media in addressing this issue, and practical steps media can take to combat gender disinformation. Participants engaged in a dynamic and inclusive discussion, bringing together experts from diverse fields such as media, political parties, and NGOs. The workshop focused on exploring the nuances of gendered disinformation, examining its impact on various communities, and identifying key challenges. The primary goal was to co-create a comprehensive list of actionable steps collectively to mitigate the spread of gendered disinformation. Participants emphasized the issue of disinformation in Kosovo, focusing on the media's portrayal of women's roles. During the discussion participants talked about the journalists, emphasizing the rapid spread of information in the digital space and its impact on mental health. Journalists participating in the workshop shared experiences from working in media, and how financially driven these companies are, making a fertile ground for click-bait articles. Adams discussed the importance of internal changes within media outlets, ensuring women journalists have agency and addressing stereotypes and structural inequalities within the media company that they work. The discussion delved into editorial policies, accessibility, and language specificity. Participants highlighted the need for media and information literacy and increased fact-checking efforts to combat gendered disinformation effectively. The discussion emphasized the role of media outlets in creating an empowering environment for women journalists, addressing internal issues, and actively countering information disorders through fact-checking initiatives.

## Key takeaways:

- **The importance of promoting media literacy and fact-checking** initiatives to enhance public awareness and critical thinking skills. Establish and support fact-checking groups on social media platforms to counter disinformation, particularly focusing on gendered disinformation.
- **Implement internal changes** within media outlets to empower women journalists. Address stereotypes and structural inequalities within editorial policies. Ensure that women journalists have agency and representation, creating an inclusive and empowering environment.
- **Collaborate for industry-wide change** in order to foster collaboration between media, tech companies, and NGOs to strategize and implement effective measures against gendered disinformation.

# DISIConnect - Kosovo Tech Industry Meets Big Tech



In collaboration with The Kosovo Association of Information and Communication Technology (STIKK), NDI Kosovo organized an informal gathering as part of the DISICON Conference. The objective was to establish connections between the growing tech industry in Kosovo and prominent global tech representatives, including META's Government & Politics Partner in Central & Eastern Europe, Oskar Braszczyński, and Sara Oh, Co-Founder of T2 and Nonresident Fellow at the Digital Forensic Research Lab at The Atlantic Council (formerly X). The primary aim was to cultivate relationships and explore opportunities for growth within Kosovo's tech landscape, leveraging the insights and expertise of international leaders in the tech industry. Throughout the discussion, representatives from the tech industry had the chance to delve into critical topics, including why Kosovo remains absent from the digital map, challenges related to monetization, cybersecurity concerns, and issues surrounding Kosovo's VPN. These 21 deliberations highlighted barriers that hinder equal opportunities for Kosovo citizens, despite the rapid growth. The event provided a platform for open discussion on pressing issues that impede Kosovo's digital presence. Tech industry representatives engaged in a comprehensive discussion addressing the reasons behind Kosovo's exclusion from the digital landscape. Monetization challenges were scrutinized, shedding light on the challenges that hinder Kosovo citizens from enjoying equal opportunities in the global tech arena. Cybersecurity emerged as a pivotal topic, with a thorough exploration of concerns and potential solutions to fortify Kosovo's digital infrastructure. The discourse extended to the challenges posed by Kosovo's VPN services, unveiling complexities that demand strategic considerations for a more inclusive and secure digital future. The collaborative gathering served as a catalyst for identifying actionable insights and fostering partnerships to propel Kosovo's tech sector onto the global stage.

## Key takeaways:

- **Underscoring the significance of linking Kosovo's ICT sector** with global tech leaders, highlighting the potential for impactful collaborations.
- **Kosovo's absence on the digital map**, monetization issues, and cybersecurity concerns, were discussed during this meeting, setting the conversation towards targeted solutions.



# DISCONNECT

# Summary

DISIConnect debuted in the sixth edition of DISICON with the explicit goal of enhancing collaboration among diverse stakeholders, facilitating tailored workshops, and fostering networking opportunities for all participants. DISIConnect featured six primary events:

- DISIConnect - Kosovo Tech Industry Meets Big Tech
- DISIConnect - Information Integrity Forum meeting with META
- DISIConnect - Regional Information Integrity Forum (RIIF)
- DISIConnect - Information Integrity Academy - 3rd module
- DISIConnect - Session with cybersecurity students
- DISIConnect - Political Polarization: Information Disorders as means for division

On the event's second day, NDI Kosovo organized five meticulously curated workshops at Prishtina Tech Park, amplifying the conference's impact. Participants immersed themselves in an array of enriching workshops, training sessions, and captivating 'fireside chats' tailored for aspiring young journalists, cybersecurity enthusiasts, and dynamic youth representatives from political parties in Kosovo. Among the luminaries was Sarah Oh, whose thought-provoking 22 discourse with cybersecurity students garnered acclaim, with her insights later published at Forbes. You can read Sarah Oh's compelling experience in DISICON, titled "[What The ChatGPT Store Means For AI Accessibility.](#)"

## DISICConnect - Information Integrity Forum meeting with META



At the Information Integrity Conference DISICON, we facilitated informal meetings with participants from the Information Integrity Forum alongside Oskar Braszczyński from META, and Sarah Oh, Co-Founder of T2 and Nonresident Fellow at the Digital Forensic Research Lab at The Atlantic Council. This gathering provided a networking platform for media representatives, journalists, and researchers to engage with representatives from major tech companies and international organizations. Participants discussed the challenges they currently encounter in the online sphere and collaborated on ideas for potential cooperation. A focal point of the conversation was the monetization potential in Kosovo via social media platforms like Facebook and Google. The parties involved committed to pursuing initiatives to advocate for these opportunities to extend to Kosovo, including the integration of the Albanian language.

### Key takeaways:

- **Agreements were made to pursue monetization opportunities** of online media outlets via Facebook and Google in Kosovo.

## DISICConnect - Regional Information Integrity Forum (RIIF)



The Regional Information Integrity Forum (RIIF) convened its ninth meeting during DISICON on December 5, 2023, under the theme of navigating democracy in the era of AI. This session brought together representatives from Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. Participants engaged in discussions addressing the challenges posed by information disorders, particularly in the media landscape of the region, and explored strategies to maintain information integrity. Opening remarks were delivered by NDI Deputy Country Director Valon Kurhasani. The discussion continued with experts Moira Whelan and Sarah Oh, shedding light on the increasing role of artificial intelligence in propagating disinformation.

Whelan highlighted the evolving strategies employed by actors to manipulate public opinion. , Braszczyń, on the other hand, highlighted the significant role and implications of AI in the disinformation, while Oh discussed global efforts to regulate AI and mitigate its negative impact on democratic processes.

The meeting underscored the importance of collaborative efforts between tech companies and civil society organizations to combat the proliferation of disinformation. It provided a platform for sharing insights, best practices, and innovative solutions to tackle the challenges posed by AI-driven misinformation.

RIIF members are:

- 35 mm - Montenegro
- Youth Atlantic Treaty Association - Albania
- Association of Journalists of Kosovo - Kosovo
- Association of Journalists of Macedonia - North Macedonia
- AKTIV - Kosovo
- BIRN - Kosovo
- BIRN - Albania
- Center for Monitoring and Research - Montenegro
- Center for Investigative Journalism - Serbia
- Center for Investigative Reporting - Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Crime and Corruption Reporting Network - Serbia
- European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations - Montenegro
- SHARE Foundation - Serbia
- Faktoje - Albania
- F2N2 - North Macedonia
- ADS/Hybrid.info - Kosovo
- Metamorphosis - North Macedonia
- Open Gov Hub - Albania
- Partners Serbia - Serbia
- Raskrinkavanje - Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Truthmeter - Serbia
- Why not? - Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Internews Kosova
- Democracy Plus - Kosovo
- Democracy for Development - Kosovo

## Key takeaways:

- **The RIIF meeting highlighted the growing threat of information disorders in the digital age**, emphasizing the need for collective action to safeguard information integrity.
- **Insights from experts underscored the critical role of artificial intelligence** in spreading disinformation and the urgency of implementing responsible practices and collaborative strategies to address this challenge effectively.



The Association of Journalists of Kosovo in partnership with NDI Kosovo, organized the third module of the Information Integrity Academy, under the framework of DISICConnect. Gendered disinformation was the key theme of this module which brought together journalism students and professionals participating in the third module of the Academy. This module focused on the critical theme of responsible gender reporting, acknowledging the significance of accurate and sensitive portrayals of gender-related issues in the media. A speech on "Gender Sensitive Reporting" was delivered by Jennifer Adams, an international expert and consultant on gender, media and human rights-centered digital policy, and co-founder of Pen to Paper, a media development firm.

Ambassador Nancy Soderberg, NDI's Senior Country Director in Kosovo, opened the session, underscoring the academy's importance in the context of journalism and its role in combating violence against women engaged in public life. Kerry Monaghan-Hogler, Deputy USAID Mission Director, delivered a compelling address stressing the pivotal role of accurate reporting in shaping perceptions and countering stereotypes. Xhemajl Rexha, chairperson of AJK board, emphasized the timely importance of this module which focuses on gender-sensitive reporting within the Information Integrity Academy.

This third module of the Information Integrity Academy succeeded in delivering essential insights and techniques related to responsible gender reporting. The engagement of participants, combined with the expertise of the facilitator, Jennifer Adams, contributed to a dynamic and informative session. Participants expanded their knowledge on basic terminology and concepts - including gender identity, gender (as a normative framework), and gender equity vs equality - as well as the international standards that establish certain preconditions and requirements necessary for the meaningful integration of these concepts in media outlet policies and gender-sensitive journalism. Additionally, they learned about the ways media can challenge structural inequality, and play a meaningful role in expanding individual and collective agency, while discussing real life examples brought by Jennifer Adams and participants themselves.

## Key takeaways:

- **Empowering participants with skills to identify online violence against women** in politics.
- **Reporting accurately on gender-related issues**, emphasizing responsible journalism.
- **Public awareness about women's representation** in the media was a key focus, contributing to a more equal and informed discourse on gendered reporting.



# DISConnect - Session with cybersecurity students



The objective of the DISCONNECTS session was to provide a session/workshop to targeted audiences in parallel to the conference. This session's aim was to provide cybersecurity students with an exclusive opportunity to engage with distinguished tech industry experts, Sarah Oh, Co-Founder of T2 and Nonresident Fellow at The Atlantic Council, and Akilnathan Logeswaran, Lead of International Tech Engagement at Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), led the discussions. This dynamic two hour session offered valuable insights into working for major tech giants, ethical tech engagement, civic tech initiatives, and crisis response strategies. Through a Q&A interactive session, students gained practical knowledge, industry perspectives, and networking opportunities, enhancing their understanding and prospects in cybersecurity and tech engagement.

The session delved into practical scenarios, crisis response experiences, and the importance of information integrity. Oh shared her experiences addressing the Rohingya refugee crisis in Myanmar, while Logeswaran discussed mobilizing tech for social change. The session concluded with a vibrant Q&A, focusing on the tech advancements especially that of ChatGpt and what that means for the social and work interactions in the future.

## Key takeaways:

- **Ethical Considerations in tech engagement** were underscored during the discussion as we adapt in the ever-changing tech industry.
- **Networking and career development** on real-world challenges and impactful engagement strategies equipped participants with actionable insights, enhancing their understanding and prospects in the fields of cybersecurity and tech engagement.

# DISConnect - Political Polarization: Information Disorders as means for division



NDI organized a workshop on the use of information disorders as a tool to further political polarization as part of the DISICnects. The workshop, hosted by Moira Whelan, Director for Technology and Democracy, NDI DC, and Artan Murati, Senior Program Manager, NDI Kosovo, was held with members of political party youth wings, European Democracy Youth Network EDYN ambassadors and other young activists. Participants delved into the intricacies of disinformation, misinformation, propaganda, and other forms of information disorders, gaining a deeper understanding of their mechanisms and effects. Through interactive discussions and real-world case studies, the workshop explored how these challenges contribute to deepening political division and hinder communication and cooperation. By equipping participants with important knowledge, the workshop promoted informed decision-making, fostering constructive dialogue, and ultimately mitigating the negative impacts of disinformation campaigns on the political landscape.

## Key takeaways:

- **Information disorders can impact political outcomes** and have gained more weight in recent elections all around the world.
- **Youth can overcome disinformation campaigns by understanding** all forms of propaganda and information disorders. Understanding is the first step to combating these phenomena.



UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO  
GENDERED DISINFORMATION



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