

FAKE NEWS FACTORY



Truth or fake?





Rosaria Talarico

Communication Specialist

Frontex

Communications Office

E-mail:

rosaria.talarico@frontex.europa.eu

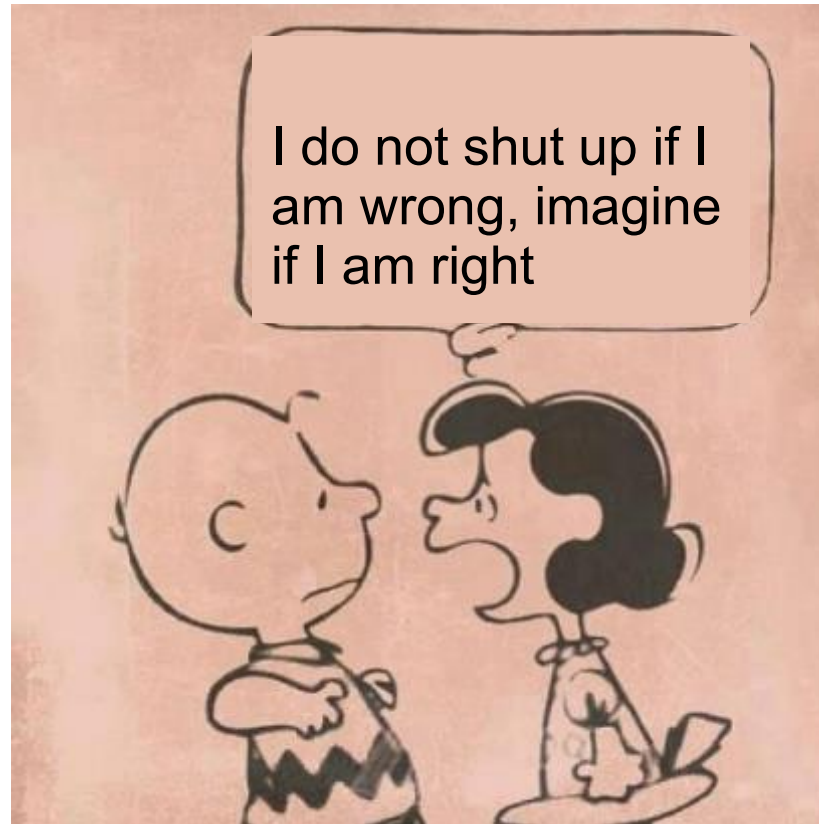




‘Natural born journalist’, I...

- am an investigative journalist and Captain (Italian Army reserve officer)
- wrote for major Italian newspapers, winning several national journalism awards
- worked in strategic consulting (Booz & Co.)
- served as a spokesperson at the ministerial level in Italy
- taught journalism and effective communication at various universities and for Italian Army Special Forces (PsyOps – Psychological Operations)
- headed the Product Development Media Center in Lebanon, having Indonesian soldiers under my command
- am specialised in media training and crisis communication
- regularly conducted interview sessions for top management both in public and private sectors

In a nutshell...



Agenda

- 1. FAKE NEWS IN HISTORY
 - 1. RUSSIA-UKRAINE
 - 1. FAKE NEWS, ANATOMY OF A PHENOMENON
 - 1. IDENTIFYING FAKE NEWS: INDICATORS
 - 1. COUNTERMEASURE TOOLS
 - 1. DEBUNKERS

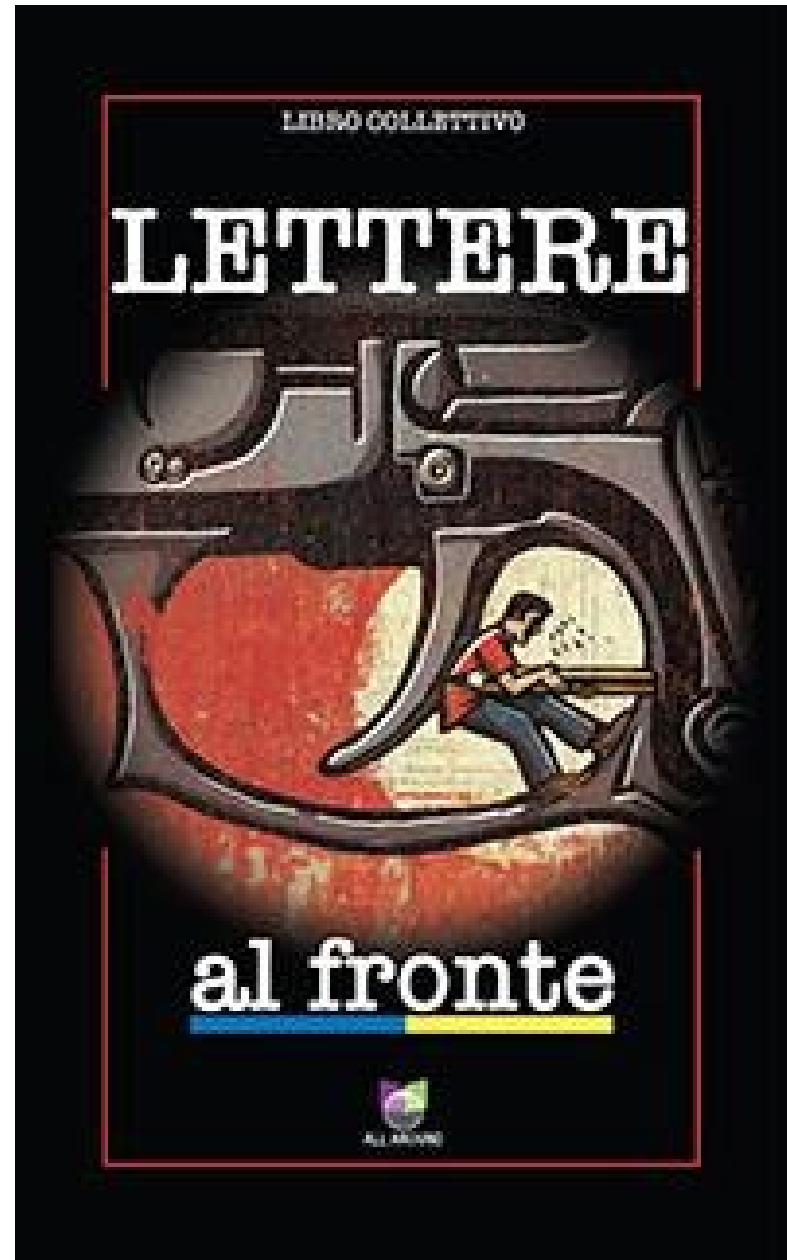
The Russian Way

In Russian tradition:

- techniques are *as rudimentary as effective*
- *exploiting the democratic freedoms of the West against it* is precisely one of those

“The Russian regime uses Western values to subvert the Western narrative”

Oscar Jonsson and Robert Seely,
experts on Russia and military strategy:



From camouflage to memes

It is not surprising that in such a context it is more functional to 'wear' a meme than camouflage to go to war.

Memes are

- immediate
- moving
- ironising
- surprising

hence ideal for spreading disinformation.

They propose other similar content (and 'verisimilitude') that actually directs the choices of the unwitting user who clicks where the algorithm knows it is most likely he would click

Russia-Ukraine

Ukraine's communication and media choices have been effective and timely compared to Russia, which has always given lessons in influence and disinformation.

Russia certainly does not lack narrative ability... think about its writers and poets, investigators of the human soul like few others, and of its literature, which has reached unparalleled heights in the past.

Stories are everything

Video and live broadcasts are on the front line even if you are on the couch, all it takes is the illusion of 'being there' or the perception of being informed and participating.

- ❖ **The mechanism behind the social media narrative is polarisation**

i.e. the often uncritical adherence to two opposite extremes, ignoring the complexity and nuances that lie in between. Complexity requires study and reflection and is therefore highly detrimental to immediate sharing based on you gut feeling.

Meme is important because it has strong connections with the culture it belongs to, with traditions and imagery: in a word, with the identity of a person or a group of people. It provides a context and a key to interpretation and, of course, motivation, the most valuable one because it is detached from material interests (such as money or convenience), but anchored instead in the emotional resources of each person.

Alexis de Toqueville understood this a few centuries ago:

- ❖ **'A false but clear and precise idea will always have more force in the world than a true but complex one'.**

Keep calm... and do PsyOps!

- ❖ For decades, in military circles we have been talking about psyops, psychological operations - a definition that evokes mind control, manipulation, brainwashing and that is often trivially reduced to certain advertising mechanisms that make people buy one detergent rather than another
- ❖ *'Keep calm and carry on!'* is an invitation that many people nowadays unconsciously share because it is the basis of many memes. Instead, it is a British government slogan that is considered the forerunner of psyop and was conceived by Winston Churchill, the military and communications genius.



The content of a report that Microsoft shared with the US authorities and that highlights how in the vicinity of attacks and missile raids disinformation operations intensified in a sort of composite strategy that combines a fake news campaign to support the ground invasion with the use of malware against critical infrastructure’.

In Canada during the NATO Innovation Challenge 2021 there was talk of cognitive warfare and another study showing that it is no longer so easy to tell the difference between those who influence and those who are affected: everyone is potentially a target and an actor. While in the past propaganda was passively enjoyed, today it is enthusiastically spread by those who are its victims.

A few years ago, Timothy Egan wrote in the New York Times that ‘it would be easier to sleep at night if we could believe that we got into this disinformation mess only because Russian agents disseminated provocative messages that reached 126 million people on Facebook’. Instead, the problem is us and the absence of sound judgement to discern what is true and what is false. Or at least try. Before an algorithm does it for us.

The Daily Fake



Influencers, the new mercenaries

Extracts from my book

The new mercenaries to be hired are the influencers, surgical and lethal as snipers in targeting their followers.

And algorithms certainly do not help to bring it out. According to some estimates quoted by Wired, the views of TikTok videos tagged #Ukraine (and its Cyrillic counterpart #Україна) totalled over 56 billion. A monstrous figure, from which videos posted on other social media such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook are excluded.

Cognitive warfare is an evolution of infowarfare. And just because you don't see bloodshed, it doesn't mean that it is any less dangerous than traditional (kinetic, as they say in the jargon) warfare operations in terms of the consequences. This is often something that public opinion in various countries is unaware of, but which has devastating impact on the very essence of democracies. Just think of the influence campaigns implemented through social media to steer referendums, elections, nominations or civil rights laws.



“Bullshit asymmetry principle”

‘The energy required to
to refute nonsense
is greater than what
it takes to produce it’
(Alberto Brandolini)

Brandolini's law has also been endorsed by the French sociologist Gérard Bronner: ‘Falsehood has a competitive advantage based on cognitive biases, since re-establishing the truth is often more costly than disguising it’.

Storytelling goes to war

- Propaganda (which has now reached pervasiveness and effectiveness that often makes it indistinguishable from reality) is at the heart of any battle.
- Helmeted storytelling is not completely unknown to armies, which have generally used it clumsily by inflating it with rhetoric.
- **The war is won by those who tell their stories best.** And no general can think of succeeding without enlisting **Facebook battalions and TikTok regiments.**



Social media, on the other hand, make manipulation much more immediate and powerful thanks to video language, sound montages, algorithms, neuroendocrine responses that trigger likes and shares, and the stupidity and/or ignorance of users.

Fake news, phenomenon's anatomy

In Italia le fake news hanno più visibilità delle notizie vere

Uno studio dell'Agcom dimostra che le notizie false ottengono maggiore impulso e diffusione in internet rispetto all'informazione reale

E' UNA VERGOGNA!!!!!!!!!!



Luigi Vinattieri
33 anni
Vive per strada
chiedendo la CARITA'
perchè il suo lavoro è
stato RUBATO da
un immigrato
CLANDESTINO
a causa della
politica di
SINISTRA.

Bilrahmed al-Valentini
32 anni.
CLANDESTINO.
Oltre a ricevere
35 EURO AL GIORNO,
è stato aiutato
dalla **SINISTRA** a
RUBARE il lavoro
al sig. Vinattieri.
FERMIAMO
L'INVASIONE!!!

ITALIANO RIBELLATI!!!!
FAI GIRARE PRIMA CHE CENSURINO!!!!

Fake news che rovinano la vita: “mezza Italia mi crede un pedofilo”

Società

Tecnologia

12/05/2017 - Claudia Carotenuto



Le fake news sono la news del momento, ma che succede quando una bufala online rovina la vita ad una persona?

Questa è la storia di Alfredo Mascheroni, un ragazzo di 24 anni, trasformato in un mostro da un post virale, da una fake news. **Un messaggio circolato su Whatsapp e Facebook, con un link al suo profilo e un invito a segnalarlo accusandolo di essere un pedofilo.** Sono usciti diversi articoli sull'argomento, VICE ha intervistato Alfredo, che respinge ogni accusa e racconta la sua versione.





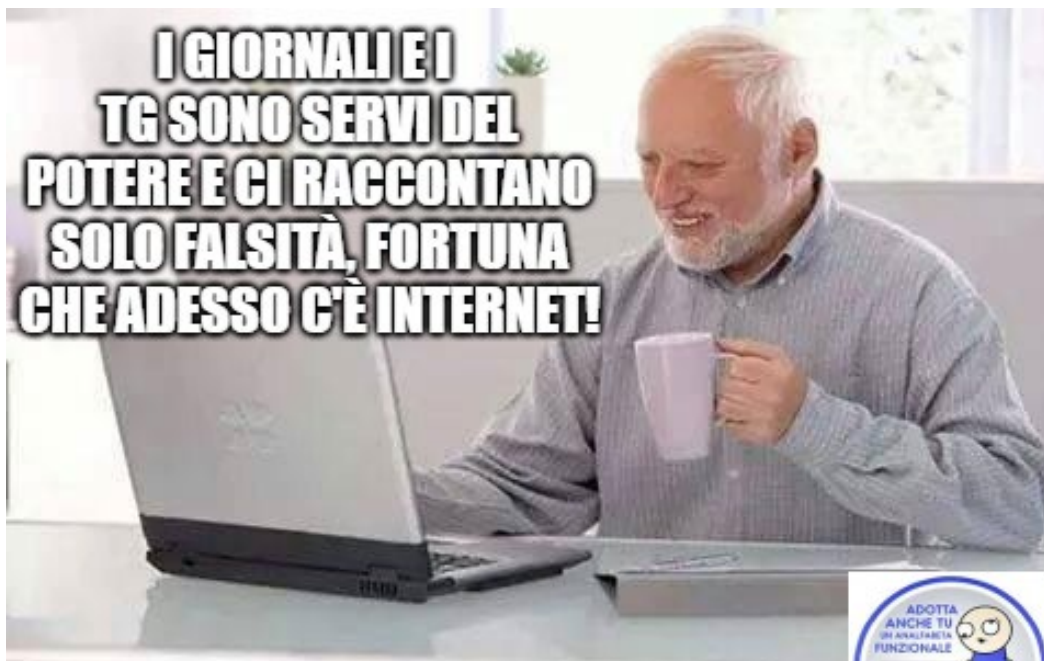
**«E' MORTO
GERRY SCOTTI»**

**IL POPOLO
DEL WEB
SOTTO CHOC**

BUFALA

CHECKBLACKLIST

**I GIORNALI E I
TG SONO SERVI DEL
POTERE E CI RACCONTANO
SOLO FALSITÀ, FORTUNA
CHE ADESSO C'È INTERNET!**



**TOH, UN
ARTICOLO DEL
CORRIEREDELLAMMERDA
ALTERNISTA, LO
CONDIVIDO SUBITO!**





shared a link.

38 mins ·



Invalido miracolato fa causa a Padre Pio. "Mi hanno tolto la pensione"

Giuseppe Giffone

LEPCIO.IT



Like



Comment



Share



Non ne hanno mai abbastanza certa gente, vogliono il miracolo ed anche la pensione, (Abbuffini):

Like · Reply · 31 mins



Si vede che costui, dà più importanza ai soldi, che aver ricevuto la grazia della guarigione.....

Si vede che non era malato..... e che aveva truffato lo stato accusando di essere malato!!!!!!

Like · Reply · 2 mins



Write a comment...



In Italy, 57% of fake content production is related to politics and current events, while 20% concerns scientific topics. Fake news have a strong emotional impact, can be divisive, and are often not covered by the traditional information system. They are superficial and impressionistic, aiming to evoke people's moods. Once triggered, the fake news is fed and re-launched into the online platforms also through the unwitting contribution of users who share and comment on the news itself on social networks.

Users tend to select information that is consistent with their belief system, forming polarised groups of like-minded people with the same narratives (so-called communities), where discordant information is ignored. For this reason debunking attempts are often useless.

- **despite the presence of a huge amount of information sources (completely free of charge!), users tend to access a limited number of them**
- **most active users on social networks are also those who access fewer information sources**
- **this phenomenon, which would seem paradoxical, can be explained by the emergence of very polarised, distinct and separate communities on social networks**

Online consumption patterns do not lead to an enlargement of the cognitive space of a person.

On the contrary, people risk enclosing themselves in highly polarised echo chambers (bubbles).

True, false or likely?

- **INFORMATION**
- **MISINFORMATION**
- **DISINFORMATION**



INFORMATION

Communication based on one or more data that tend to be objective, and in each case verifiable. It can also be biased (what I include or omit is decisive), partisan or manipulative, but **it must nevertheless be within the parameters of reality.**

MISINFORMATION

Spreading one or more false news stories - or stories containing amplified, distorted and unverifiable elements - **unintentionally, due to irresponsibility, lack of sound judgement**, superficial adherence to a narrative. Those who misinform are unable to document what they say, but believe it to be highly plausible.

DISINFORMATION

Deliberate construction and dissemination of false news aimed at portraying a person, product, organisation, nation, etc. in a negative (or even positive) light. Provides data that cannot be verified, but is often believed because it leverages expectations, beliefs.

Why do fake news spread so easily?



Main factors:

- information overload
- limited attention span of the user
- beliefs, expectations, clichés we all live in
- low education level

How to recognize fake news



Level 1

Beware of:

- ‘shouted’ titles
- misspellings and grammatical errors
- inappropriate use of capital letters
- “retouched” photos.

Level 2

Keep an eye on the URL (i.e. the address) of the website: hoaxers play frequently on assonances and modifications of names of official newspapers
(Fatto QuotidAINO or Telegra-ph)

Level 3

Beware of articles that report data, surveys and comments without reporting their sources, or whose sources are not known or authoritative

Debunking steps

- Check site name and reliability
- Google the name of the site
- Be wary of 'click-bait' titles
- Check if photos were not tampered with
- Check numbers, data and statistics
- Check sources

Fake news enter button



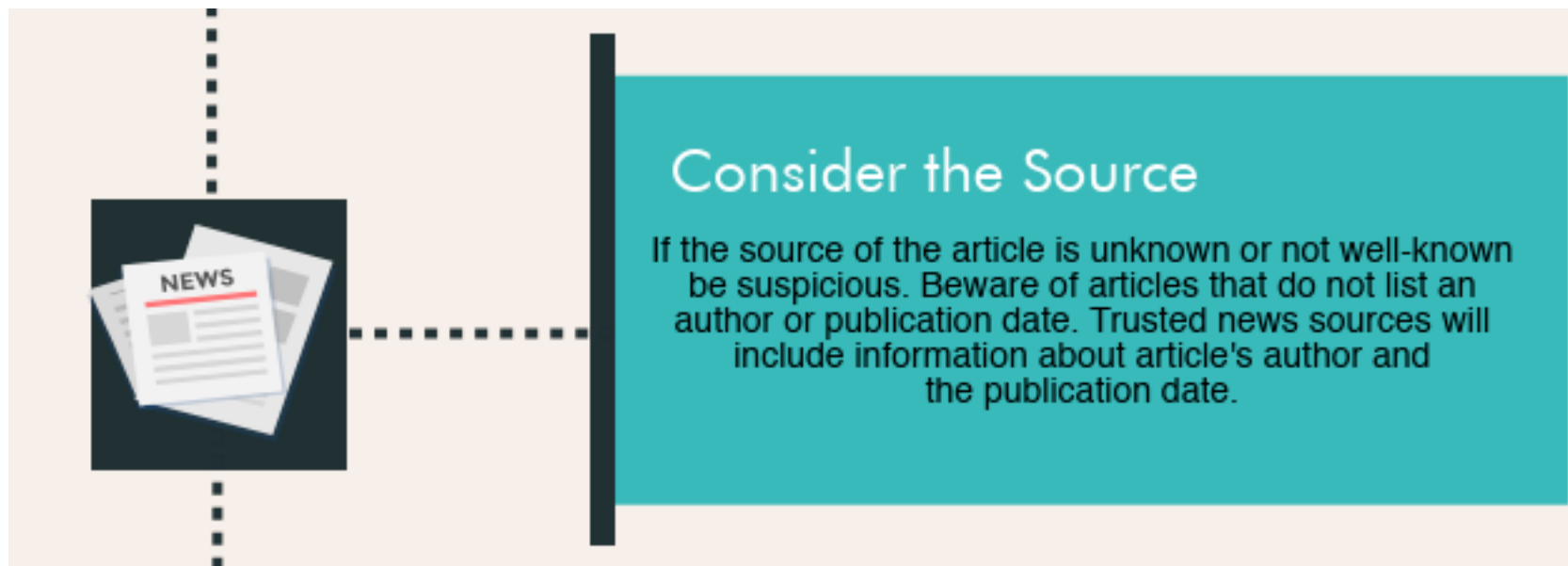
Identify fake news: indicators



Emotion and Tone

If a news story has a dramatic headline or includes exclamation points or ALL CAPS, it may be a false or misleading story. In addition, be skeptical of stories that make use of emotionally charged language. Balanced news sources use neutral language and standard punctuation in headlines and stories.

Identify fake news: indicators



Identify fake news: indicators



Citations and Images

If an article does not include information about the sources of facts, quotes and images, it could be a false story. It is extremely easy to cut and paste quotes from other stories, or to use mislabelled photographs found online. Try a Google reverse image search to find photograph sources.

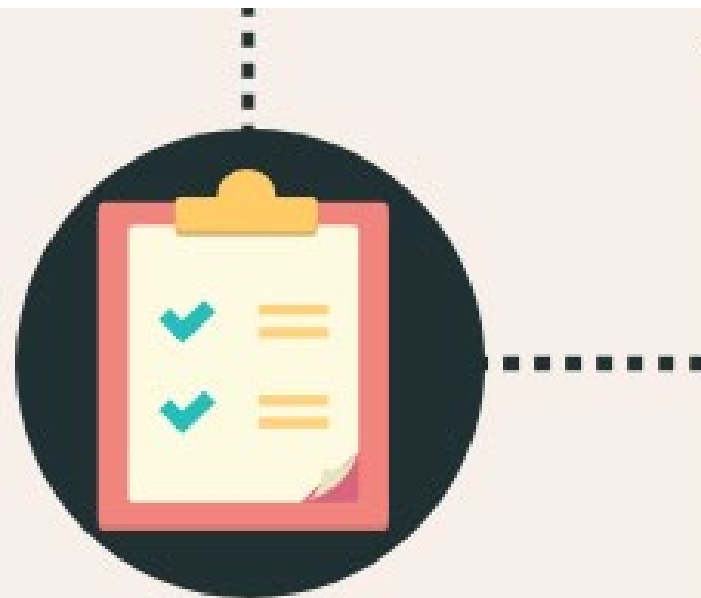
Identify fake news: indicators



Social Media

If you first saw a story on a social media site like Facebook or Twitter, there is a chance that the news may be false, misleading or biased. Make sure to check out the accuracy of any story you see on social media before you share it. Check trusted sources of news for similar stories.

Identify fake news: indicators



Fact Check

If you are still unsure whether to believe a news story or not. Try checking with a fact-checking website, such as Snopes.com, FactCheck.org and PolitiFact.com. Or ask a Librarian! Librarians are information professionals trained to distinguish quality information.

How to react to fake news?



Countermeasure tools

- Continue monitoring
 - Disinformation is frequently recycled
 - Stories and mechanisms are similar in other languages and countries
- Don't allow information vacuum
 - Make sure correct information is easily available



European Travel Information and Authorisation System

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Article Talk

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)** is a planned electronic authorisation system of the [European Union](#) for visa-exempt visitors travelling to the [Schengen Area](#) (including [EFTA](#) countries), as well as [Cyprus](#). ETIAS is planned to cost €7 for 3 years validity or until the expiry of the passport, whichever is sooner.[[][]] As of August 2024, the ETIAS is planned to come into force by May 2025 with a planned six-month transition period.^{[2][3][4][5][6]}

According to the [European Commission](#), it is planned to be implemented "for the identification of security, [irregular migration](#) or high epidemic risks posed by visa-exempt visitors."^[7] It is not a visa,^[8] and it does not guarantee entry.^[9] As a supplement to the ETIAS, the [Entry/Exit System](#) will be implemented from 10 November 2024, ending the usage of physical [passport stamps](#) and thereafter electronically registering travellers' border crossings.^[10]



Search for a language

Europe

[Български](#)

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+ Add languages



Map of Europe

Schengen Area

Screenshot en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Travel_Information_and_Authorisation_System – 14 October 2024

How to respond?

- Sharing is caring

Experiences and case studies from different countries/working environments

- Keep debunking

Constantly report false claims

Disinformation works long-term

How to respond?

- Share cases/observations with East StratCom Task Force
- They can be included in the database and help expose trends



Useful tool



NewsGuard
di NewsGuard

NewsGuard's red/green ratings and labels help users know which news and information websites to trust.

+ Aggiungi a Firefox

NewsGuard: Global Leader in Information Reliability

NewsGuard combines human expertise and technology to provide data, analysis and journalism that helps enterprises and consumers identify reliable information online.

**Storytelling went to war and
came back victorious...**

**Do we enjoy the defeat or do we
deploy critical thinking?**

Questions?

Rosaria Talarico

Communication Specialist

Frontex

COMMS

E-mail:

rosaria.talarico@frontex.europa.eu

Tel. +393474804468

