

## EDMO Advisory Board Guidance on Scientific priorities for 2022 EMIF calls in Focus Areas 2, 3 and 4

The European Digital Media Observatory acts in a scientific advisory role to the European Media and Information Fund (EMIF). The present document summarises the EDMO Advisory Board recommendations regarding the scientific priorities to be reflected in the upcoming calls, which EMIF will publish in February 2022 in respect of its [focus areas](#) #2 (Multidisciplinary Investigations on Disinformation), #3 (Research – Studies and Sandboxes), and #4 (Actions in support of Media Literacy).

Overall, the EDMO Advisory Board converged around the idea that the scientific focus and the research topics for the different areas should be kept broad in scope, so as to allow for flexibility and enable applicants to propose themselves what they consider the most relevant aspects of [EDMO's Scientific Focus](#), taking into account the specificities of their own information environment and without frustrating creativity. In this regard, it was felt that EDMO's Scientific Focus document already provides a solid framework for guiding the calls

### EDMO Advisory Board scientific guidance in relation to each of the different focus areas

#### Focus area 2: Multidisciplinary Investigations on Disinformation

The Fund's interventions will support the production of a range of multidisciplinary focus reports, covering both country-specific and thematic analyses. Examples of eligible activities include the following:

Case Reports: In-depth investigations combining expertise in fact-checking, journalism, communication, and political and social sciences, and focused on concrete cases of disinformation campaigns targeted at Europe or at specific Member States or linguistic areas, with a view to analysing and exposing relevant narratives and their influence on public policies.

Threat Analyses: Reports looking at the “disinformation lifecycle” to identify the tactics and techniques that enable online media manipulations, including agents, instigators, intermediaries and intended targets, as well as the web resources used, online/offline interactions and emerging technological risks (e.g. deep fakes) by combining expertise in fact-checking, journalism, network science, data and computer science.

“Follow-the Money” Investigations: Reports on the role of advertising networks, influencers and other channels that enable the monetisation, or allow the sponsoring of online disinformation, with a view to tracing disinformation campaigns back to relevant funding sources and evaluating budgets. Collaborations between journalists, economists and experts in digital advertising and media would be essential for a proper understanding of such mechanisms.

Polling and Impact assessments: The grants could support data collection and analyses on media usage, news consumption, trust levels, and measurements regarding the impact of disinformation on relevant European audiences and in different European markets, taking into account the specific characteristics of national media and information environments.

Media literacy Reports: The focus of these reports would be on mapping concrete media literacy initiatives at European level, describing their actions and methodological approaches, and evaluating their impact.

## EDMO Advisory Board scientific guidance on focus area 2

The Case Reports and the “Follow-the Money” Investigations were considered particularly valuable, with the latter being flagged as the most urgent. Further, the Media literacy Reports, and in particular mapping the most relevant and recent initiatives across Europe, were considered a priority step with a view to generating updated insights enabling EMIF to refine its funding activities under Focus Area 4 (below). Threat Analyses were also highlighted as an important area of funding.

## Focus area 3: Research – Studies and Sandboxes

Large and deep scientific studies requiring close collaboration between different disciplines and entities, including academic researchers, technology providers, media and civil society organisations are supported by EMIF under these calls.

Grants fund the production of studies on fundamental epistemological issues linked to the digital transformation of the media landscape, and involving a variety of political, economic, sociological and psychological aspects. Studies in scope may include research on the effects of new technologies, such as AI, on cognitive processes and civic behaviour, as well as the emergence of new forms of social interactions and democratic participation enabled by digital media. The elaboration of appropriate methodologies to assess the impact of disinformation on the public sphere and to evaluate the effectiveness of policy responses through systemic impact indicators is also supported as well as the creation and use of testing environments (sandboxes) to experiment with software applications or other methodological solutions (e.g. automatic detection of disinformation and/or analysis of its online propagation patterns).

## EDMO Advisory Board scientific guidance on focus area 3

The EDMO Advisory Board felt that, in this area, EMIF calls should be phrased in such a manner as to leave a wide margin of flexibility and discretion to applicants, while also encouraging proposals that (a) fill existing gaps in relevant literature by combining perspectives from different disciplines, (b) deploy new methodologies and aim to answer fundamental human and societal questions surrounding disinformation and (c) lay out standards/frameworks/approaches for better understanding social harms resulting from different forms of media manipulation. The need was also emphasized for work that moves theoretical studies forward and combines innovative theoretical approaches with practical testing and implementation of remedial measures. This requires an inclusive approach, supporting ambitious trans-disciplinary and trans-national projects rather than a series of small-scale, one-off studies in single disciplines.

In terms of thematic focus areas, as pointed out above, applicants should refer to EDMO's Scientific Focus as a basis for defining their proposals. When it comes to identifying gaps in current analytical approaches, the key requirement should be to ensure that proposals adopt a strong trans-disciplinary focus.

#### Focus Area 4: Actions in Support of Media Literacy

This funding window supports initiatives aimed at increasing the level of media literacy in Europe through effective cooperation among educational institutions, academia, civil society organisations, media outlets, media literacy organisations and online platforms. Examples of eligible activities include the following:

Design and delivery of appropriate, replicable trainings/training materials to schoolteachers and/or educators active in out-of-school contexts, including sharing of best practices across linguistic, state and cultural borders (“train-the-trainers” approach);

Development of multi-lingual educational materials targeted at different age, linguistic and/or cultural groups, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable segments of the population, as well as tools based on innovative pedagogic approaches, including gaming and creative uses of remote learning methodologies, to be used by trained teachers and educators;

Development of software applications, tools and innovative methodologies to identify possible instances of disinformation, promote the use of fact-checking services and reporting by social media users, and/or raise awareness about the danger of receiving and propagating disinformation.

#### EDMO Advisory Board scientific guidance on focus area 4

The EDMO Advisory Board emphasised the importance of taking into account the outcomes of future *Media literacy Reports* in Focus area 2, as discussed above, given that there is a lot of activity in the EU in this space.

In general, rethinking media literacy as digital literacy was seen as important, as well as thinking along a lifespan perspective, so that target groups for media literacy initiatives would not only be young people, but also elderly demographic groups and other social or professional profiles. Further, the “train-the-trainers” approach was highlighted as a particularly important area for funding under the first 2022 EMIF call.