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Misinformation in scientific news in Bulgarian for future inoculation

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Scientific news in Bulgaria is not a high priority as there are not many specialised media to systematically cover the information flow, and scientific discoveries in the daily news are mostly covered by editors of international news and often appear in the sections titled *Curiosity*. The present study does not go into an analysis of the causes and consequences of these biases, although the problem of misinformation in science is largely rooted in the lack of professionalism in the field, as science news is not directly related to political misinformation, but could influence the societal reception. Still, mis/disinformation often permeates science news as well. Till now, the misinformation in scientific news in the Bulgarian linguistic field has not been research topic, exceptions are the analyses related to the provocations around the Green Deal (CSD, 2023) and indirectly to climate change.

This study tries to identify and compare the main narratives related to misinformation and science in the online space and analyzes some interesting cases of fake news in the media space in Bulgaria. Lewandowsky defines several disinformation strategies in science news: undermine and question the scientific consensus, highlight scientific uncertainty and demand certainty as a condition for climate action, attack individual scientists to undermine their credibility, undermine institutions in general, such as peer review, pseudoscientific alternatives through a network of blogs (Lewandowsky, 2021). These strategies are also visible in the Bulgarian space, and identifying the main narratives can serve as a possible inoculation against future misinformation.

The methodology involves, on the one hand, the manual monitoring and identification of controversial news related to science from Bulgarian online media. Specific cases are analyzed in an attempt to typify the narratives. On the other hand, technology has also been used to extract the topics by keywords related to science and climate change from very large online media platforms. The results of both approaches provide a picture of possible narratives and issues related to the representation of scientific news in the Bulgarian linguistic field.

Among the most shared news stories emerged not those that were scientific, but pseudoscientific ones related to dubious health advice, astrology and conspiracy theories. In this sense, the strategy of questioning the scientific consensus, undermining institutions and using pseudoscientific alternatives is obvious. Scientific hoaxes related to Bulgarian history, as well as to everything *Bulgarian*, have emerged as a characteristic feature of Bulgarian social networks. Generative artificial intelligence is also a frightening topic. On the other hand, a topic like Global

Information Systems is hardly touched upon, except by highly profiled publications, which can be considered a good sign.

Based on the narratives found, future prebunking and inoculation could be done. The narratives can be compared with those emerging in the post-Soviet space in other European countries and Europe in general, and in this sense, the study is a step toward a more general understanding of the processes of mis and disinformation in the scientific news flow not only in Bulgarian.