

Fake News:Adenauer Foundation, real danger,is disinformation

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"No propaganda only but a real danger in the political discourse". That is what think the Director of Media Program South East Europe of Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Christian Spahr, about fake news. Spahr talked at the end of "Public discourse in Europe: Can media help to save democracy?", two-days International Conference Seemf (South East Europe Media Forum) in Sofia (Bulgaria) organized by South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO; Vienna), Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (Berlin), Central European Initiative (Cei; Trieste). Seemf debated about the role of media business today in the context of fake news, populism, budget constraints and the digital revolution. Do we need to be more careful to the fake news and its consequences? "Yes, it is not a notion that is misunderstood or misused in the political discourse that one politician says fake news to another one, just for having a debate, so we should not use or misuse the term 'fake news' in the sense that we are just using it against the political opponent, this is a real danger in the political discourse and therefore it is more useful to speak about disinformation because disinformation is a more scientific term and we can actually use it in a better way in order to describe what's going on, that this is a phenomenon - said Christian Spahr - Not propaganda only, because propaganda has always existed in the history of media, but it's something beyond, it's the presentation of false information as true, and it's systematic presentation of false information on the internet, with the help of social media, and this is of course something that we are facing since a couple of years". How people reacts to fake news? "We need to find answers because the risk of fake news is not only or not in the first line that people believe in the fake news, but people tend to believe in nothing, because they see that fake news are produced a lot and at the end they don't believe even in the professional and good media outlets, so basically fake news deteriorate the political discourse and journalists and politicians have a common responsibility to do something against it". What can journalists do to avoid or to reduce the possibility of diffusion of fake news with their work? "I think two aspects are important, first of all that journalists who have high professional standards, they always hear different sides of the story, they always check the facts and in the times of the internet, of course, speed is very important in journalism, but the quality is even more important if you want to stay credible, so they need to combine speed with quality and not just quoting statements of others but check the facts and keep high professional standards, it's very difficult in the digital era but it's very important. The second point is that investigative journalists can do a lot in order to

debunk and unviol fake news. They actually have the best instruments to debunk fake news, so investigative journalists should work with social media platforms like facebook, but also with the politics. Actually, European Union and individual member states, and NATO and other international organisations are working on this phenomenon of fake news, analyse it and also make it public and explain how it works. I believe that if political community and media community work together, they can achieve more if they do this alone". Do you think there was a role of fake news in recent political elections in Germany? "There has been fake news targeted for instance to Russian speaking minorities in Germany, there has been fake news also targeted to other groups of the society, also in context with the topic of migration. I don't believe that this changed the outcome of the elections, it influenced certain groups of people, but of course it didn't change the result of the elections as such. We have to take it seriously if we want to keep a healthy discourse in the Parliamentary democracy". (ANSA).

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