Artificial intelligence sabotaging the public image of EU institutions

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Abstract
The objective is to understand consequences of disinformation about European Union institutions caused by artificial intelligence, which shows how AI can build a negative image of EU institutions and lead to the citizens' loss of trust in them, and how citizens can be manipulated through the use of AI, which leads to the necessity of them having a critical approach to online content. The paper uses prior work to explain how we use AI as a tool bringing benefits and vulnerabilities, based on integrating technology in governance, education, project management, which is a necessity since we live in a smart city. The approach relies on case studies, such as the European Parliament elections from 2024, when EU institutions gave warnings about AI-generated content such as deep-fakes, manipulated political videos, use of AI-created audio content, and about disinformation campaigns on online social media. The French far-right political networks used AI-generated visual content to lead to anti-migrant attitudes, since it showed them behaving violently and threatening the social order, making EU citizens no longer trust EU institutions and experiencing a sense of lack of security. Results show that the public relies on abductive logic: they notice something unusual in the AI-fabricated content and they build hypotheses under the influence of anti-EU political orientations. In turn, this shows the anxieties and crises the EU institutions and EU itself are confronted with. The paper has implications for EU staff, researchers, as well as for citizens, regarding improving citizens' AI literacy and knowledge about where to look for reliable information, as well as on their own judgement. The value of the paper lies in its analysis of the case studies from ideological and psychological perspectives, in order to raise awareness on ways in which we are persuaded about a fake state of affairs.

Keywords: Democracy, Disinformation, Technology, Online Social Media

1. Introduction
In order to discuss the topic of this paper, we need to consider the current context of our lives. It is formed by our living in smart cities – as most of the population lives in urban areas –, by our increasing relying on technology, on our use of artificial intelligence, on our living in the European Union – for those citizens of EU member states –, the latter which implies a certain mindset, values, principles, objectives, and lifestyle, in short, a certain ideology, next to specific laws and a specific system of government.

Nowadays, we come across artificial intelligence in a variety of ways, starting from our everyday life scrolling on our online social media account, where we see photographs, videos, and posts about which we wonder if they were made by AI or if they are real, and continuing with our need to learn skills for using AI for making some tasks in our professional life to be done faster and more efficiently. AI is both a tool for making our work easier, for making it look more professional, and a tool for bringing in false facts, false presentations of various states of affairs, and false proofs. Bringing in false proofs can lead, in the case of EU institutions, to sabotaging their public image. The EU institutions' public image is crucial for having citizens' trust, which in turn leads to a sense of security and stability. Using AI to sabotage the image of EU institutions works just like in the case of spreading conspiracy theories and fake news in order to persuade citizens of a state of

affairs contrary to facts, but important to the interests of other political groups. Conspiracy theories lead to blaming certain groups, individuals, or organizations for various incidents with severe and tragic consequences [1, 2]. Among elements associated with conspiracy theories are "political apathy, support for non-normative political action, [...] prejudice, crime, violence [...]" [1]. Fake news refer to news that are intentionally misleading and purely fictional, but which are presented as genuine news, with the purpose of manipulating citizens opinions, in order to influence elections, as well as political beliefs and reactions towards various political institutions and representatives. According to contemporary discourse and media coverage, fake news are defined as "referring to viral posts based on fictitious accounts made to look like news reports" [3]. Contents created by AI can help illustrate conspiracy theories and fake news by bringing in apparent proofs such as pictures or videos of a certain incident, event or speech. Online social media is a fast way of spreading around false information, which can be meant to cause harm – disinformation – or not – misinformation [4].

The European Union has issued an AI Act, which is meant to consider AI related risks and which is the first "the first-ever legal framework on AI" [5], showing that the EU is prepared to act in cases of AI misuse. The risks start from the possibility of not knowing why AI may take decisions which are not the most correct ones in situations such as "a hiring decision or in an application for a public benefit scheme," and continue with threats posed to safety and human rights, as well as with "harmful AI-based manipulation and deception" [5], with AI determining someone's professional course through access to education, and many other risks.

Using AI to sabotage the public image of EU institutions can have harmful consequences towards the citizens, since EU institutions offer, among others, legal frameworks for rights, and ensure social stability, as well as access to information. By having groups hostile to EU institutions, politics, and law using AI to sabotage EU institutions' image, citizens can be manipulated into having a false image of reality, and also to act towards their own threat to their personal safety. Anti-EU groups can influence citizens to start protests, they can lead to social unrest and even violence, and they can prompt citizens to break laws. We notice that not only is access to information important, but especially necessary is a good filtering and passing through critical judgment of the information received.

2. Literature review

Examining the use of AI in today's society leads us to consider both benefits and vulnerabilities.

AI has changed the way our world looks like, starting from education – and we even have now the term smart education [6] – and continuing with areas such as project management [7]. AI has changed the labour market. On the one hand, some jobs may disappear, while some new ones may appear [8]. Employees will need to be retrained, and also "integration of new technologies into organizations and society" [8] needs to be ensured. These AI-related changes do not mean only development; they also mean "risks related to algorithmic discrimination, unequal access to new opportunities, and the economic impact on the most vulnerable segments of the population" [8].

AI helps in the very functioning of today's societies. Central to modern development of urban life is the concept of smart city, which is based on "the integration of digital technologies data-driven governance practices, and proactive citizen participation, thereby establishing the basis for efficient, inclusive, and responsive urban management" [9]. Most importantly, we need to keep into account that smart means digital transformation of cities, institutions, and public systems, yet "It becomes smart only when digital transformation is translated into better governance, stronger resilience, broader participation, institutional learning, and public value [10]" [11]. Organization in smart cities mirrors that of a large-scale project. As stakeholders, "citizens can influence urban decision-making" [9]. Smart cities are "intricately structured systems in which economic, social, and political-geopolitical factors coexist and interact within a shared spatial and institutional framework" [9]. For cities in EU member countries, we can see its influences in the culture and ideology of institutions, in the principles and objectives related to various aspects of smart cities. The active engagement of citizens in smart cities reflect a democratic mindset. Priorities in developing smart cities are influenced by "the geopolitical environment" [9].

While a sense of stability can be ensured through an efficient organization, "Geopolitical instability, institutional fragility, and social inequality present significant obstacles to the development of smart cities and to sustainable urban transformation" [9]. These issues of instability reflect the general atmosphere at supranational level – in EU context, in the cases we have in mind for the present paper –. Instabilities at a political level, and doubts about EU institutions, can extend to everyday life in smart cities, as they have a direct impact on citizens' everyday lives. Cooperation of citizens with institutions is needed, and doubts about EU institutions become an obstacle. There is a connection between national and supranational levels, based on the "interplay between supranational institutions, national governments, and societal actors" [12], meaning that national institutions can work based on EU values. Once EU values are put into question – based on loss of trust in EU institutions -, entire societies can collapse and everything can become unstable. The context of "Declining trust in democratic institutions" [13] means reduced citizens trust in national governments [14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19], but also in supranational institutions" just like the EU [13, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25]. Here we have the problem of citizens losing trust in democratic institutions, which leads to loss of stability and loss of "legitimacy of democratic regimes" [13], which also means conflict between the polarized trust and "conflict between different segments of the population" [13]. The EU relies on its institutions in order to function. It is a mechanism of institutions, agencies, and bodies which work together in order for the EU to achieve its objectives. Like smart cities, we can claim that the EU has the structure of a large-scale project.

The EU promotes e-governance [12]. E-governance is part of the organization of a smart city, since it means "to deliver services electronically to the people" [26]. It means bringing the use of technology in the administrative system for various domains such as education and health [26], but also prompting citizen engagement [27].

Introducing digital technologies in governance led to changes in the ways in which governments function, meaning in the ways in which they offer public services and interact

with citizens [28]. We can mention the evolution of electronic governance from a basic form of offering its services, which is called e-governance 1.0, towards e-governance 2.0, which brought major changes for citizens' and governments' roles as far as providing public services is concerned [28, 29, 30]. Further on, we can mention e-governance 3.0, prompted by the rise of AI, blockchain and Internet of Things (IoT) [28]. E-governance 3.0 is known for improvements as far as citizen participation and providing public services are concerned, as well as for improvements in receptivity towards citizens and adaptation of administrative systems to suit the citizens' needs. AI is currently used in the domain of public administration, where it is used to improve public services and make work more efficient [31]. In addition, AI contributes to shaping governance into being citizen-centered [31].

In understanding smart cities, we need to move from "a tech-centric approach to a citizen-centric approach in urban governance and development" [32, 33]. Citizens need to feel digitally included and they can participate in the online medium on online social media [27]. We gradually see digital transformations for public service, e.g. in Romania, within e-governance [27], which reflects European Union policies regarding reducing disparities. Since smart government means "greater transparency and citizen engagement" [34, 35], it suggests democratic values and principles. Among the "desired outcomes of smart governance" [34], we can find "improved public services, enhanced trust in government, and more effective policy implementation" [34]. We notice in e-governance and smart governance the wish for improving citizens' trust in governments, and thus a wish for stability. Trust among institutions of smart cities and citizens is established, among others, through financial transparency and audit [36]. In this sense, the smart city's most important feature is that it "depends on transparent and accountable financial management that fosters trust between citizens and municipal authorities" [36]. While it is true that "If we want to have a better quality of life, we have to eliminate technological barriers to provide efficient communication in every walk of life" [26], e-governance and living in a smart city, where using smart devices is common, also come with risks about information security. We need to consider that, with the high rate of technological development, "The landscape of cybercrime has turned into an immensely organized and collaborative global marketplace" [37]. Cybersecurity is linked to the rights of the individual [38], which are defended by the EU.

We thus notice that issues which are important for the EU are those related to stability, e-governance, transparency, trust, and cybersecurity. Citizen participation and democracy are also keywords in today's e-government,

3. Materials and methods

We can look at case studies in order to see how EU institutions are affected by contents created by AI and how trust in these institutions is affected.

These case studies can be considered based on the background of decline of some citizens' trust in the EU institutions in time, e.g. according to "the European Social Survey for the period from 2002 to 2020, […] confidence in the European Parliament has not only declined over time but also polarized as citizens have increasingly moved away from the

'average citizen'" [13]. In addition, "trust has polarized, especially among the young versus the elderly and the employed versus the unemployed" [13]. At the same time, they can be considered as related to the context of Euroscepticism and of ideologies that are against the EU. In the past, the situation was different: the majority of Europeans were "deeply attached to democracy as the only acceptable political system" and most citizens could not picture "realistically an alternative system of government for their country" [39]. We could claim that the democracy is still what citizens wish for, yet their image of it in the context of the EU has been differently shaped by various anti-EU orientation groups, making it seem less compatible with and less supported by the EU. We witness loss of trust in others and loss of trust in instititutions throughout the EU [39].

Political trust means that an EU citizen expects EU institutions to act in their own interest [13, 40]. Trust in EU institutions such as the European Parliament is expected to have declined especially due to a lower trust in the EU due to economic crisis [39].

The EU retains, however, a positive image among the majority of its citizens, based on the results of the survey carried out by European Parliament's Winter 2025 Eurobarometer [41]. Citizens wish for protection from the EU, for security, for improving economic issues, for preserving peace and democratic values, and they wish to be united in order to achieve EU objectives [41]. At the same time, weaknesses related to problems faced by some segments of the populations and certain issues the EU is confronted with are exploited by hostile groups, and recently they have started making use of AI to achieve this.

Since we notice that the EU has been facing a context of crises, we may relate the AI-created context as willing to confirm and to bring proofs for this state of affairs. What has happened during the European Parliament elections from 2024 could be tied to this context. We witnessed, during that time, AI-created context such as deep-fakes which led to the manipulation of political life. There were, on this occasion, campaigns which sabotaged the image of the European Parliament on online social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok and X.

The European Parliament [42] took notice of this disinformation and hostility based on AI created contents and warned citizens about it, explaining these attacks in the context of threats against the value of democracy EU institutions stand for: "With the rapid development of social media and the rise of geopolitical tensions, the EU is facing more risks of foreign actors attempting to disrupt elections and democratic processes across the EU." The European Parliament [42] took measures against attacks concerning democracy through disinformation by members of parliament forming a special committee: the European Democracy Shield, for the 2024-2029 term. The committee examined "the impact of existing and planned legislation to detect possible loopholes that could be exploited for malicious democratic interference," together with aspects such as the following: "interference via online platforms and their impact on democracy; attacks on critical infrastructure; cyberattacks; AI-generated content and deepfakes aimed at foreign interference and information manipulation" [42]. The European Parliament [42] also mentions on its site some techniques used for disinformation, in an attempt to raise the citizens' awareness to issues such as manipulation, which means to deliberately "deceive

public opinion and create confusion so truth can no longer be distinguished from lies," creating polarized opinions, which lead to the presence of "the most extreme viewpoints in an existing debate in order to silence more moderate viewpoints and make democratic debate difficult or impossible," as well as to narratives which underline and accuse instituties of "fraud, irregularities, untrustworthiness" in order to threaten democracy, to "hinder democratic debate." We retain the exaggerated reactions against everything about the EU, caused by the spreading of fabricated information pointing a problematic or negative aspect about the EU. From this one detail, citizens expand their negative views on everything related to the EU, completely discarding the EU and its institutions, no longer considering the EU to bring in any advantage for them. We thus see the power of persuasion of fabricated information.

On the occasion of European elections from summer 2024, the European Commission took measures by asking "big social sites, like TikTok and Facebook, to clearly label political advertising and reduce 'virality of content' that threatens the integrity of European elections" [43]. The Commission "recommended that big platforms promote official information on elections" [43].

These measures against misinformation for the 2024 European Parliament elections relied on the analysis of "900 fact-checking articles published in 11 elections in 10 European countries until October 2023" [44] which was presented in a report. This report showed "that there was widespread disinformation about the electoral process, fuelled by unfounded claims of voter fraud, foreign influences, and unfair practices" [44]. Based on the report, the EU took preventive measures for the 2024 European Parliament elections, under the form of a plan which meant "several key initiatives, including legal regulations, collaboration with tech companies, and public awareness campaigns" [44]. The Digital Services Act [45] meant that "large online platforms like Facebook and TikTok must identify and label manipulated audio and imagery, including deep fakes, by August 2025" [44], which was a regulation aiming "to increase transparency and user awareness" [44]. The AI Act also resulted as a means of preventing risks related to AI misinformation, its aim being that of establishing "a comprehensive legal framework for AI to mitigate the risks associated with deep fakes" [44], by relying of measures such as "transparency requirements for deep fake creators and distributors, prohibitions on harmful deep fakes, and risk assessments for high-risk AI uses like deep fakes" [44].

We can notice how the EU institutions react promptly to what is going on in online social media, and take measures against spreading such fake information and how they create laws and also how they try to warn citizens. In addition, we can also see the reassuring results of prompt reactions, as in the case of the elections from summer 2024, "Despite waves of fake news and foreign interference campaigns, the European parliamentary election proved resilient against disinformation threats" [46]. These prompt reactions show "the EU's commitment to safeguarding the integrity of elections by combating the spread of misinformation" [44]. We need to consider it as a warning that "Using AI-generated deep fakes and disinformation is a growing concern for democratic societies during election cycles" [44] and consider carefully any kind of information we come across. This is a major issue, since "Electoral campaigns are one of the key moments of democracy" and especially

since "In recent times, the circulation of disinformation has increased during these periods" [47]. EU citizens need to consider if their opinions and impressions about political life are not the result of manipulation, as the phenomenon of disinformation "has serious consequences for democratic health since it can alter the behaviour and decisions of voters" [47]. The EU institutions' prompt reaction through taking measures regarding misuse of AI can only lead to increased trust in the EU institutions. We could claim that politics is a domain which relies a lot on emotion and on bias, and not so much on reason and logic. Confirmation bias is at work when fabricated information and AI created visual proofs match citizens' beliefs: they see this information as true since it expresses their personal beliefs. The confirmation bias also means that we look for that information we agree with, and that we interpret it as true since we agree with it [48]. This can make is so easy for citizens to take for real false, fabricated information about the EU and its institutions, as they can see in various false, accusatory information and AI created visual content, what they fear the most, or what they believe is true and what could happen in the future based on their fears. Fabricated content can work for them to confirm their own false beliefs. In addition, they may resonate, due to their fears and false ideas, with anti-EU ideology and anti-EU groups. Fabricated AI content which sabotages the public image of EU institutions can simply confirm what anti-EU groups have been talking about and what the citizens' imagination had made up of reality. Since false information is difficult to identify, citizens may start developing further fears and ideas starting from these pieces of information. They may rely on previous experiences about corruptions and bad intentions in the political world. They may create false cause and effect connections between what goes on wrong in their societies, in their countries, in their personal lives, and attribute all these to EU institutions. People are known, based on psychological and psychoanalytic research, to project their emotions or worldviews, including fears and other negative emotions outside [49], and the political world can be in this position, as receiving all the negative projections. Projection has been defined as "viewing a mental image as objective reality" [50]. Various elements in the political world, from political personalities to institutions, can receive the blame. In addition, people expect from the political world to solve all of their problems, which may not always happen, this leading to their disappointment and to them seeing everything in a negative light.

Another example of case where AI damaged trust in EU institutions, by implying that their decisions were wrong, was that of the fabricated AI videos showing migrants in a negative light, which confirmed some citizens' ideas about them being dangerous due to their violent behaviour, and which also reinforced negative stereotypes about migrants. The French far-right political orientation groups relied on AI visual content in order to support anti-migration orientations [51], such as AI-generated videos shows migrants behaving violently, and thus threatening social order and stability, which in turn led to EU citizens no longer trusting EU institutions, and also feeling that there was a lack of security in the EU. In such a case, the EU is placed under attack and the image of its institutions is sabotaged by relying on one of its decisions or values, which is framed as dangerous and harmful towards its citizens. This believed bad decision leads to total anti-EU feelings. This case, together with the previous one, shows how a deeply contrasting presentation of EU institutions can convince EU citizens based on confirmation of their previous beliefs, fears, and discontents. In the case of far-right political orientation groups from France, we see

how fears about the EU were sparked by the images created by AI: "Most of the AI-generated campaign images used by French parties 'convey messages of anti-immigration, lack of safety in France, lack of freedom of expression, a flawed justice system, and poor agricultural protections,' the AI Forensics report found" [51]. The AI images brought to life and amplified citizens' fears and discontent about a series of issues, attacking the EU for not fulfilling its promises, which are included in its values, objectives, and principles, such as safety, justice, self-expression, and agricultural protection.

We can see the two cases analysed as representing hypotheses about what could go wrong with the EU, or about the way in which some citizens imagine the EU, its actions, and what they could lead to. EU citizens can be seen as relying on abduction [52] in their approach to understanding what is going on. They see a detail which seems unusual, strange, or surprising; then they start making hypotheses by imagining what could have led to this state of affairs. In the case of the EU, they may have formed a certain image about its values, principles, objectives, and what these could mean, how these could make their society look like. When these are contradicted, they wonder why. In their creation of hypotheses, EU citizens may come across various pieces of information which may confirm their beliefs, since they have been influenced by various other opinions and political orientations, which have already set up the context for doubt against the EU.

We can also see how citizens' reactions towards the EU, its institutions, and fabricated content using AI against the EU and its institutions have a strong emotional component. As if to prevent problems, the European identity seems to have been created by the EU intentionally, and as a risk mitigation measure, as suggested by the following statement: "European identity may act as a buffer against hostility towards the EU" [53]. Furthermore, "exclusive conceptions of national identity and perceptions of threat posed by other cultures are associated with opposition to the EU [54, 55, 56, 57]" [53]. This difference between European and national identity seems to lead to conflicting attitudes towards the EU and those citizens attached to national identity only can belong to those groups which become strongly oriented against the EU. This in turn means that they will be easily persuaded by manipulative AI created contents sabotaging the image of EU institutions. To illustrate the impact of emotions, EU citizens can be influenced in their perception of threats, preferences, use and understanding of information by emotions such as "anger, fear and enthusiasm" [53]. With respect to anger, we are told that it "lowers risk estimates, and leads individuals to try to remove perceived threats while relying on instinctive routines" [53]. Fear "makes individuals more risk-averse and cautious, and leads to an increased search for information [58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65]" [53]. Enthusiasm leads to "positive goal-oriented behaviour, but […] it tends to reinforce people's habitual behaviours and existing political choices (e.g. partisanship), minimises perceived risks and reduces reliance on information [66, 67, 68, 69, 70]" [53]. In the examples of AI-fabricated content, and disinformation, as well as manipulation present in the cases studied in this paper, we notice that they could be highly persuasive, and even situations related to fear have led to trusting the information. We may also consider that fear and anger may have both been at stake as emotions involved when EU citizens were presented with confirmation of problems and crises of the EU, in the situation of migrants, for instance. EU citizens may have feared about their security, but they may also have felt angry that the EU does not keep its

promises of ensuring safety and stability for them. There is not one single emotion, but a variety of emotions associated with some EU citizens finding in AI created contents confirmation of their beliefs. They can feel frightened, angry, but also enthusiastic that they have been right about certain issues and that now someone else brings up the same idea.

In spite of the measures taken by the EU during the 2024 summer election campaign, the issue is not solved, meaning that the EU needs to remain vigilant, and that measures need to be taken continuously to adapt to AI threats: "Experts say fake images raising fears around issues such as immigration have proliferated since EU elections" [71]. Thus, the case of the use of such anti-immigrants false images in France for the far-right orientation is not a unique one, but part of a generalized far-right orientation strategy. False, AI generated images, such as those "designed to cause fears of an immigrant 'invasion'" are used by "far-right parties and activists across western Europe" [71]. We see that Ai generated images are clearly used by a particular anti-EU orientation, which is the far-right, and we can see examples from Germany, France, and Italy in this sense. The German far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party used in 2024 AI image generators in order to gain proof for "its anti-immigrant stance" [71]. In this case, we have the following example for Germany of an AI generated image: "a blond-haired, blue-eyed woman holding up her hand in a stop gesture, with a stop sign and German flag in the background" [71]. This image is accompanied by a text placed over it, which "says people should stop coming to Germany because the country does not need more 'gang-rape specialists' due to the Green party's immigration policy" [71]. Such a text gives the message that Germany is not a safe country due to the EU supported immigration policy, which in turn leads EU citizens to consider that EU institutions have endangered EU member states. In France, far-right parties used in the 2024 election campaign "AI-generated visuals to build their websites and represent photo-realistic events that never occurred" [71]. Such examples for the French far-right include posts on X online social media platform with "images of people approaching a beach on boats, emblazoned with an anti-immigration slogan, and videos criticising the president, Emmanuel Macron" [71]. The impact of visual images is clear, as we mostly rely on our visual sense to find information, and to understand the world. The truth of such images may not be questioned right away due to their strong emotional, next to visual, impact. In the case of Italy, during the 2024 summer election campaign, "the populist Lega party published anti-trans and Islamophobic AI-generated images" [71], as well as images with "Macron posing as a fictional 'EU soldier', in a message with anti-EU overtones" [71]). Even if these images were not claiming to show what has actually happened, they do send a powerful anti-EU message. In addition, "Other non-watermarked images on Salvini's account include images of women and children eating insects, a reference to a popular rightwing conspiracy theory that the EU was preparing to make European citizens eat insect-based food" [71]. These are issues which had a strong negative impact on those with an anti-EU orientation and suspicions about the EU.

Problems with disinformation and belief in contents created by AI, just as in the case of fake news spread without the help of AI, or of conspiracy theories, can be considered to appear starting from the perceived distance between EU citizens and EU institutions. The EU, through its institutions, has an administrative role, and citizens may perceive EU institutions as distant [72]. EU institutions may be perceived as bureaucratic and thus as

difficult to access and to communicate with directly by EU citizens. EU institutions may be seen as abstract, administrative entities. They may not be familiar enough with how they function and they may feel that they cannot know for sure what happens there. This is what leads them to make hypotheses and to be easily carried off by emotion especially when seeing images generated by AI with this very purpose. We notice how use of AI generated visual content against the EU and its institutions started in 2023, then grew and continued in the case of the 2024 summer elections, illustrating and raising doubts about how trustworthy the EU and its institutions are.

We can also mention the case of the elections in Slovakia from 2023, when, just before its parliamentary elections, "an audio deep fake appeared on social media" [73]. It showed how "The candidate of the liberal Progressive Slovakia party, Michal Šimečka, and journalist Monika Tódová from the newspaper 'Denník N' allegedly discussed a scheme to rig the election by buying votes from the country's marginalized Roma minority [74]" [73]. Since "this disinformation attack [...] used only an audio file" and also since "it was spread so close to the election date" this made it "harder to be effectively debunked" [73]. Since it was so close to elections day, the information had no time to be checked, and it did make a difference: "Pre-election polls saw a tight race between Šimečka's Progressives and the SMER party and most polls predicted SMER to win the election (SMER in fact won by 5%)" [73]. The purpose of the fake, AI-generated audio content was to "demobilize Šimečka's voters and encourage far-right and populist voters" [73]. The case of Slovakia clearly shows how the result of the votes can be questioned and the entire institution of democracy can also be questioned. We may ask ourselves, in this case, to what extent was voting democratic in the case of this election campaign? As far as scenarios and hypotheses are concerned, "Researchers regularly consider future scenarios in which AI plays a major role, expressing the 'fear of what could happen' [75]" [73]. Indeed, "It draws the atention of policymakers and public opinion to specific threats, helps to imagine what challenges the society will face" [73].

The case studies presented in this paper suggest all hypothetical scenarios, at least from the point of view of EU citizens. However, they suggest negative scenarios, or what could happen in the worst case, suggesting lack of trust in EU institutions and, thus, sabotaging their public image. All of these scenarios can be challenged once EU citizens can look at facts and also at the information brought up by EU institution in relation to them. The scenarios present in the case studies analysed in this paper show a dystopic World in relation to the misuse of AI. Digital inclusion of citizens, based on online social media expression of opinion, in the case of these case studies, brings up what could happen in the worst case scenarios. E-governance or smart governance in the case of the scenarios in the cases presented in this paper leads to loss of trust in EU institutions. Artificial intelligence becomes a challenge to be addressed by EU institutions in their communication with citizens, since it is new and not so easy to be understood. EU institutions and EU citizens need more time in order to understand its mechanism and to be able to achieve and to impart notions of AI literacy. EU citizens need to be warned about having to check for more details any information coming from unofficial sources on online social media. They need to be warned that mostly, in online social media, they have to do with opinions and perspectives on the EU, rather than with facts and truths. The problem is that, even if the EU focuses on

welfare, as well as on the less favoured regions' development, some of the EU citizens do not have access to the Internet and all related information sources about the EU [76]. At the same time, those citizens having Internet access may be facing confusion regarding information sources, and thus may not know which information source they should trust. This could be solved by instructing citizens to check official EU websites and to verify any information they see online, especially in non-official online social media.

Understanding EU institutions and risks related to AI created contents sabotaging their public image, as well as how EU takes measures against this problem has been considered on the context of how "contemporary debate on smartness has moved beyond the narrow fascination with devices, platforms, and technical novelty" [11] towards a complex, "mature" [11] understanding and perspective: "a city, an institution, or a public system is not smart merely because it is digital" [11]. Instead, them being smart is related to the moments "when digital transformation is translated into better governance, stronger resilience, broader participation, institutional learning, and public value [10]" [11]. The measures which need to be taken against AI created false contents is in itself an example of how being digital alone is not enough for cities and systems to be efficient; they need additional precautions, rules, and laws, as well as raising awareness to false information. Raising awareness to the issue also implies EU citizens collaborating in online social media environment to prevent the spread of false information created with AI regarding the image of EU institutions. Thus, citizens can be prompted to participate actively in the efforts of EU institutions. We can consider, in the context of AI false contents meant for manipulation against the EU and its institutions, the possibility and necessity of smart education for developing citizens' skills. Existing research draws attention to the possibilities of smart education: "Smart education in the modern university space combines formal and informal education tools, and in the context of hybrid challenges, it is complemented by requirements to focus on developing resilience and citizenship skills" [77]. As governance is citizen-centred [31], citizens need to be educated about AI false images and creating false perceptions of EU institutions, thus prompting them to take an active role in judging information critically.

4. Results

We can ask ourselves which aspects regarding case studies and worst case scenarios have anything to do with EU citizens' lack of trust in EU institudtions or growing lack of trust in them, which can be caused by rumours spread through fake news and conspiracy theories, as well as by actual crises the EU has been confronted with, but which it noted and started on its way to create risk mitigation strategies and improvement of its laws. AI poses challenges to research ethics, but also to e-governance or smart governance ethics. Our lives can change due to the appearance of AI, from both perspectives regarding its advantages and disadvantages. AI leads to raising doubts about our vision on reality and about the actual activities of EU institutions, and, ultimately, about how trustworthy all of our perspectives on how EU institutions work can be. Eventually, we may feel that we can only know the truth about some aspects in retrospect, since a good documentation is difficult to be described, especially under the current conditions when AI contents is so much present in our lives, to the point where we no longer know whether it expresses the truth or not. We are no longer sure, in some cases, which contents is AI created and which

is not, and, especially, which contents is real and which is fictional, since we may rely on visual images in order to present a certain state of affairs.

We have seen how means of persuasion for the public function in the case studies chosen for analsysis, based on what could happen including our reliance on abductive logic [52] based on decline of trust in EU instititions and reliance on populism, as well as on our not knowing for certain of what may happen, as EU citizens when we do not search for enough information. We notice something unusual, or a problem, and then we speculate about its causes. AI false content comes in as an answer, advancing speculations which EU citizens consider possible, given false clues and tracks set up by anti-EU orietnted groups, under the form of online social media content. AI poses some significant challenges for us, based on our not knowing for certain about what is actually going on. In addition, various scenarios are possible, since we are not sure regarding how AI can distort our perception. We may have weaknesses which AI addresses at the right moment. For instance, we are tempted to project on external factors what is going on wrongly in our personal, everyday lives. What is more, AI can work based on visual imagery, which in turn has a powerful emotional effect on us.

In the cases analysed in this paper, we have seen how contents created by AI is used to support and reinforce far-right tendencies, which are against the EU, in order to manipulate election results and to prompt some EU citizens to react against the EU's laws through public manifestations such as protests, encouraged by online social media photos they see of other citizens doing so, without knowing that those photos are fake and that such incident actually never happened.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Adaptation to technological development, as well as to its use, also means adaptation to the new type of society by creating new laws to include elements of technological development, such as AI. European Union institutions do not only have a legal and political role in the case of measures taken to reduce risks related to AI disinformation during election campaigns, but especially an ethical role. We have seen this in the context of measures taken and information shared about uses of AI to create fake contents to promote, overall, an anti-EU attitude. False information, including images and videos created by AI become an issue of cybersecurity, as they are spread online and this leads to disinformation and misinformation, and as they can lead to harm and sabotage of public image of institutions such as those of the EU. Cybersecurity regarding false contents created by AI is an ethical issue, since this is all about the safety and rights of the individual. The right to have access to real information and to the real intentions, values, objectives, principles, and actions of the EU is broken in the case of AI created contents.

EU institutions need to consider how EU citizens may act based on AI-generated content, since they can be manipulated by such content in such a way so as to start acting and speaking against the EU, while losing trust in EU institutions. EU institutions need to be aware of the various possible attitudes of some EU citizens, as well as of their causes, so that they can offer enough information and access to it in order to counteract the possibility of EU citizens falling into traps such as those set up by the far right.

We grow more and more aware of communicating about reality shapes our perception of it, but also about the extent to which it is socially constructed [78]. Meaning is created in collectivities, through interaction [78] among various individuals, groups, or, in the case of the EU, of individuals and institutions. Beliefs about the EU are shaped by the way the EU communicates about its ideology, just as they are shaped by anti-EU groups. Sharing contents created by AI on online social media contributes to this process, by communicating this contents and by spreading beliefs about the EU and its institutions.

E-governance and smart governance come with various traps and risks which need to be well thought out. The present paper addresses issues relevant for EU staff, researchers and EU citizens, as it analyses case studies based on detailing how and why false information, especially visual false information, created with the help of AI, has such an impact on EU citizens. The present paper has taken into consideration activities of EU institutions related to preventing and reducing the impact of false information created by AI which has as a result sabotaging the public image of EU institutions. Citizens should be prompted to reflect on the ways in which they can be manipulated nowadays, aside from the known forms, since now AI created contents is introduced. The present paper has taken on developing the process of raising awareness to manipulation by using AI created contents in the context of ideological orientation against the EU by presenting previous research and developing research on this topic, as well as by raising awareness in its turn to the importance of this topic, for other researcher to continue studying and developing it.

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