PRESS RELEASE

THE FIRST EUROPEAN NARRATIVES OBSERVATORY PRESENTS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT A SET OF URGENT RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMBAT DISINFORMATION

The international consortium considers it a priority to equip EU institutions with resources for understanding how narratives impact citizens' worldviews, ensuring access to data for European researchers and enhancing citizen dialogues and international collaboration

Brussels, 14 November 2024 - "As the European Union begins a new political cycle, the fight against disinformation demands a strategic shift to focus on the highly polarising narratives that dominate the public sphere. Fact-checking, media literacy and regulation of social media platforms are not enough anymore. **Unlocking resilience in Europe's democracy will require mastering the narratives that shape our collective reality, and this is something that we should address urgently", said Erika Staël von Holstein**, co-founder and Chief Executive of Re-Imagine Europa, during the presentation of the White Paper *The Power of Narratives A Strategic Approach to Combatting Disinformation in Europe - Key Findings from the First European Narratives Observatory (NODES).*

Harnessing the latest advances in psychology, neuroscience, and behavioral science, the European Narrative Observatory has analysed dominant narratives on climate, migration, and COVID-19 across four languages. According to **Staël von Holstein**, "narrative communities interpret the world through similar frameworks, sharing fundamental thinking patterns, heroes and villains, and a common narrative language. Understanding this diversity is crucial as disinformation exploits diverse narrative languages in very sophisticated ways, by targeting audiences with codes that are often misinterpreted by other communities". The European Narrative Observatory "alerts us of the dangers of a growing dissemination of polarised narratives that is deepening societal division across Europe and weakening the foundations of the democratic dialogue", she added.

"Fact checking and regulation of social media platforms are no longer enough to combat disinformation", alerted Erika Staël von Holstein

The White Paper was presented at an expert roundtable hosted by **Brando Benifei MEP**, featuring contributions from prominent European figures and experts, including **Ivo Belet**, Deputy Head of Cabinet of European Commission Vice President Dubravka Šuica**, Klára Dobrev** MEP, **Alexandra Geese** MEP, **Krisztina Stump**, Head of Unit Media Convergence and Social Media at DG CNECT, **Paolo Cesarini**, Chair of the Executive Board of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), **Jacob Tamm**, Deputy Head of Information Integrity at the European External Action Service (EEAS), **Juliette Montesse**, Head of Digital Investigation for Europe at Agence France-Presse (AFP).

In representation of European Commission Vice President Dubravka Šuica, Ivo Belet highlighted that "during this mandate, the Commission has come forward with a wide range of tools to improve our democratic ecosystem**.** A key achievement has been to put citizens at the centre of the discussions on the future of the European Union. President-elect von der Leyen has called for 'a new era of dialogue with citizens and stakeholders'. Looking to the

future, the **Democracy Shield** will be a key priority in the next mandate. The NODES White Paper can certainly inspire that work. Projects like NODES contribute greatly to our shared endeavour of fighting disinformation and building democratic resilience".

Staël von Holstein presented a concrete set of policy recommendations developed through the European Narratives Observatory to effectively combat disinformation campaigns that thrive on emotional resonance and deep-seated psychological biases, exploiting the narratives that define our worldviews. Key recommendations include:

1) **Establishing an Expert Group onNarratives to support the European Commission** with evidence-based guidance on how narrative structures could be used to foster a more cooperative and constructive public discourse.

2) **Supporting the Development of European Narratives Observatories**, to effectively tackle disinformation and its role in polarising public discourse. Employing advanced data analysis techniques, including AI and big data, these observatories can map out the diverse and evolving narratives across the EU, providing crucial insights to policymakers.

3) **Ensuring Access to Data on Public Discourse for European Researchers/ Enhancing Data Access for Researchers.** To fully realise the potential of thes Digital Services Act (DSA), the European Commission must ensure that researchers across Europe can effectively access and analyse this data, while adhering to GDPR and other European data protection regulations.

4) **Integrating Citizen Dialogues and Deliberative Democracy with Narrative Analysis.** Citizen dialogues present a powerful avenue for democratic renewal. By integrating narrative analysis methodologies, these initiatives can move beyond binary "either/or" debates and explore more inclusive framings. With public engagement platforms like the European-funded ORBIS project, there is potential to scale these dialogues across Europe.

5) **Fostering International Collaboration on Narrative Analysis.** Disinformation networks do not respect national borders, and combatting them effectively requires a coordinated effort to share best practices, research, and insights on how narratives shape public discourse. Europe can play a critical role in uniting global efforts to combat disinformation and strengthen the resilience of democratic societies worldwide.

The consortium will present preliminary findings on its Climate Narratives Report at an **Exhibition at the European Parliament in Strasbourg** (26th – 28th November).

About NODES

The European Narrative Observatory was created by a consortium led by the European think tank Re-Imagine Europa that includes Agence France-Presse (AFP), the Centre de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), PlusValue, Sotrender, Science Feedback, and Università Ca' Foscari Venezia. The project, under the scientific leadership of Professor Andrzej Nowak, brought together relevant scientists as Professor David Chavalarias, Research Director of the Centre de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS); Guido Caldarelli, Professor of Physics at Università Ca' Foscari Venezia; Re-Imagine Europa's Contemporary Mythologies Scholar Marcin Napiórkowski, and Emmanuel Vincent, Science Feedback's founder and director. They worked hand in hand with journalists, fact-checkers, and prominent experts.

About Re-Imagine Europa

Re-Imagine Europa (RIE) is a non-partisan, European think-tank founded by the former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing as the first "incubator" for new political ideas, in honour of his partnership and friendship with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and their efforts to define a future that goes beyond personal, national or partisan interests. Working in collaboration with an international network of members, strategic partners and knowledge partners, RIE strives for an interdisciplinary approach to its research about narratives and polarisation, aided by an in-house **narrative team** led by prominent scientists.

For further information regarding the NODES project or a potential interview, contact us at press@re-imagine.eu.