

“We started an avalanche”. Will they expose, disrupt, and eradicate the authoritarian regime's security services, media, tabloids, and bots? ... If ETN has a say, they will - with criminal charges.

By Bosko Nektarijevic 31.05.2025

[EU Commits Over €43 Million in 2025 Horizon Calls to Combat Disinformation, Radicalisation, and Surveillance Abuse](#)

The European Commission has announced a new wave of Horizon Europe funding for 2025, aimed at confronting some of the most dangerous threats to democracy and public trust: disinformation, radicalisation, and the abuse of surveillance. With a total indicative budget of €43.5 million, four newly launched calls under the Civil Security for Society work programme target the urgent need to develop ethical, effective, and citizen-focused security solutions in an increasingly polarised and manipulated information landscape.

Leading the initiative is the call HORIZON-CL3-2025-01-FCT-01, which dedicates €18 million to advancing frontline policing through better forensic evidence analysis and information systems.

This call seeks to modernise law enforcement tools while safeguarding human rights, enabling a stronger institutional response to digital and hybrid threats, including coordinated disinformation campaigns.

HORIZON-CL3-2025-01-FCT-02 follows with a €12 million budget, focusing on the prevention, detection, and deterrence of terrorism and violent extremism by unpacking the social and psychological dynamics that enable their spread.

The emphasis here is on developing long-term, community-rooted approaches to radicalisation, involving researchers, civil society actors, and security professionals.

Another key call, HORIZON-CL3-2025-01-FCT-03, provides €7.5 million for improving the intelligence picture and strengthening cross-border efforts to disrupt organised crime.

With surveillance tools increasingly deployed in legally grey or authoritarian ways, this call aims to reinforce democratic oversight while enhancing early warning systems and strategic deterrence.

The fourth call, HORIZON-CL3-2025-01-FCT-04, allocates €6 million to humanitarian demining and the disposal of unexploded ordnance in civilian zones, also including public education on risk.

While seemingly separate from the information environment, this action supports the stabilisation of post-conflict regions where trauma, propaganda, and disinformation often intersect.

In total, thirteen projects are expected to be funded across the four calls. The funding envelope reflects a serious commitment by the EU not just to innovate in the field of civil security, but to defend the values that underpin its democratic model.

The Commission is actively encouraging consortia made up of investigative media, civic watchdogs, legal scholars, security practitioners, and academic institutions to respond to these calls.

With elections, digital manipulation, and geopolitical tension rising across Europe and its neighbourhood, these calls form a strategic response to ensure that democratic resilience is not only a political promise but a funded reality. Horizon Europe is now a frontline in the defence of Europe's democratic space.

[EU's 2025 Research Drive to Fight Disinformation and Defend Democracy](#)

Brussels, 31 May 2025 – The European Union is launching a €438 million research offensive under Horizon Europe's 2025 work programme to combat disinformation, strengthen democracy, address surveillance risks, and curb radicalization.

Announced a few days ago, four key calls under Cluster 2 (Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society) - DEMOCRACY- 01- 05 -07 -09 alongside Cluster 3 (Civil Security for Society) initiatives, aim to counter threats to European values.

As disinformation, autocratic trends, and extremism erode trust, these calls rally researchers, policymakers, and communities for innovative solutions.

The HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-09 call, funded within Cluster 2's €438 million budget, tackles disinformation while protecting freedom of expression.

It targets harmful narratives, like gendered disinformation and anti-LGBTIQ rhetoric, analyzing how data-driven media spreads falsehoods. The goal is to arm EU institutions, media, and civil society with tools to fight disinformation without compromising privacy or media freedom.

“We must stop lies without silencing voices,” a Commission official states.

The HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-05 call, also under the €438 million Cluster 2 allocation, focuses on radicalization, extremism, and hate speech.

It funds training for police, educators, and social workers to spot early radicalization signs, emphasizing empowerment for women and girls to tackle root causes. By sharing EU-wide best practices, it aims to reduce polarization and foster social cohesion.

HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-01, drawing from the same Cluster 2 budget, establishes advisory networks to counter foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI).

It equips EU and national authorities with tools to shield democratic processes, like elections, from external disinformation campaigns, bolstering societal resilience.

The HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-07 call, with a dedicated €10.5 million, investigates the rise of autocratic appeal fueled by misinformation and online polarization.

It seeks to understand why authoritarian narratives resonate and develop strategies to restore trust in democracy. “Decoding these trends is key to saving democratic values,” says a Horizon Europe coordinator.

Surveillance concerns are addressed indirectly. Cluster 3 projects, VIGILANT and FERMI, funded with €7.3 million and concluding in 2025, use AI and natural language processing to detect manipulated media and extremist content.

These efforts, likely informing new 2025 Cluster 3 calls, prioritize privacy under GDPR and the Digital Services Act to avoid surveillance overreach, though ethical oversight is critical.

These initiatives align with EU efforts like the European Democracy Shield, championed by President Ursula von der Leyen, and the €1.3 billion Digital Europe Programme (2025–2027) for fact-checking technologies.

Collaboration is central: researchers will partner with NGOs, tech platforms, and law enforcement for inclusive solutions. However, gaps remain—private messaging apps like WhatsApp, major disinformation channels, and surveillance risks need sharper focus.

Open for applications via the EU Funding and Tenders Portal, the HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-01, -05, -07, and -09 calls, alongside Cluster 3 efforts, highlight the EU's resolve for a democratic future.

With €438 million at stake, this research drive blends policy, technology, and community action to counter threats while upholding European principles. As disinformation and division intensify, this investment could forge a stronger, united Europe.