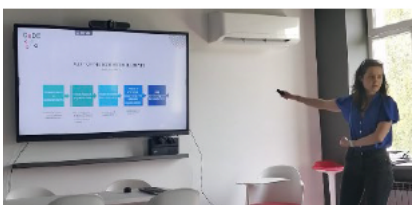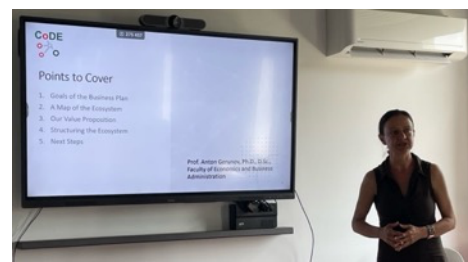# OVERVIEW OF THE CODE PROJECT'S PROGRESS DURING THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF IMPLEMENTATION.

On June 20, 2024, the first meeting to present the progress of the CoDE project was held at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (FEBA), Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. The event was opened by the Dean of the Faculty, Associate Professor Dr. Atanas Georgiev. In his welcome speech, he highlighted key points regarding the importance of disinformation and its impact on society and the academic community.
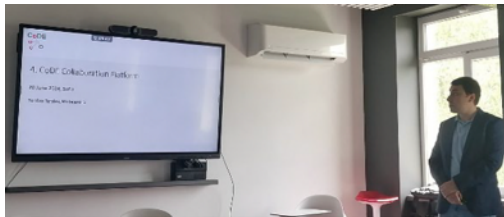

A brief overview of the project's essence and an introduction to the participating organizations was presented by the project leader, Chef Assistant Professor Dr. Irena Mladenova from the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (FEBA), Sofia University. The progress in developing the business model and value proposition for the ecosystem was demonstrated.

The concept of the ecosystem for countering disinformation was presented by Chef Assistant Professor Dr. Maria Yurukova from the Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University. She introduced the audience to the challenges related to the local instances of disinformation. In her presentation, she identified key reference points regarding the specifics of the information environment in Bulgaria.
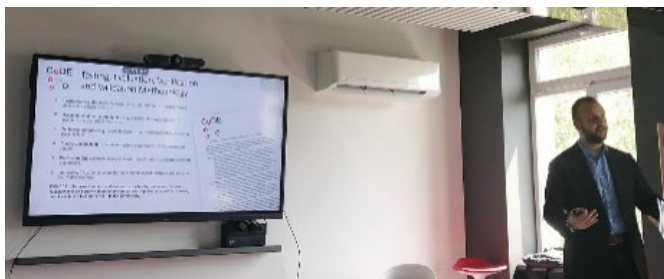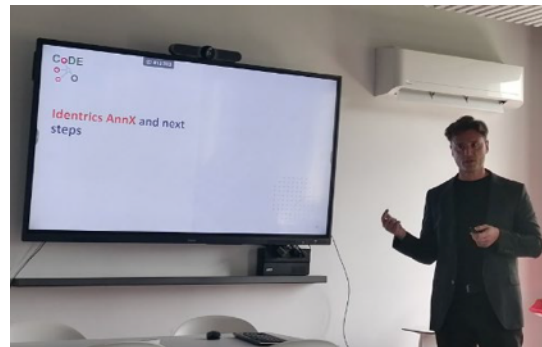
Devora Kotseva and Todor Kiryakov from A Data Pro contributed to the discussion by presenting their work on the methodology used in practice to identify different types of disinformation. Key components included the results of actions taken to identify information operations and information events within the information environment.

Yordan Terziev from Webcentric presented the collaborative platform used by the Project community. It became clear from the presentation that this is not just a platform for information exchange, but a new type of digital tool for building a community to counter disinformation.

Ivaylo Blagoev from Contipso and Chef Assistant Professor Dr. Maria Yurukova presented the developed trainings program and the results achieved in organizing the pilot training. Participants had the opportunity to gain insight into the process as excerpts from the training platform and the student course were presented. It was revealed that the established training network currently includes five universities, and 112 people have been trained so far, with over 60 successfully completing their training.

Nesin Veli from Identrics and a team from A Data Pro presented the results of the application of the AnnX tool and demonstrated how media intelligence systems can be transferred into an environment for countering disinformation. A specific case, "Soldiers in Ukraine," was presented to demonstrate the integration of information signals from various media (both online and offline) for identifying a targeted disinformation campaign. The audience had the opportunity to explore how information profiling and systematization are conducted, with

techniques demonstrated for identifying original content, hate speech, synthetic content, and propaganda.

Borislav Bankov from the GATE Institute at Sofia University presented a methodology for testing, evaluating, verification, and validating (TEVV) tools with the ultimate goal of democratizing the testing process.

Georgi Sharkov from the European Software Institute – Central Eastern Europe (ESI-CEE) presented a methodology and tools for prototyping and validating an analitical platform that helps systematize information into knowledge graphs, identifying connections between different sources and the topics they are working on.

Associate Professor Dr. Velizar Shalamanov from the Institute of Information and Communication Technologies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IICT-BAS) presented important aspects of the project's dynamics and the value of the tasks completed so far. He highlighted the key challenges and applied approaches related to the comunity dynamics, the organization of the eight partners, and their collaborative efforts. The presentation outlined the expected direct benefits, including new tools, a new online training platform, engagement of key players, the collection and systematization of best practices from the EU and NATO, the creation of an accelerator, the development of a proprietary collaboration platform, and, last but not least, the highly successful collaboration among the project partners.

A roadmap until the project's conclusion was presented, outlining three waves of development across two levels of capability. The focus for the next six months will be on training, followed by the first hackathon, planned for April-June 2025. The results, indicators for measurement, and timelines for the entire project period were presented and discussed.

The presentation concluded with an open discussion, offering the opportunity to address important topics and key aspects.

Guests at the event included representatives from the Ministry of Defense, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the America for Bulgaria Foundation, the U.S. Embassy in Bulgaria, the British Embassy in Bulgaria, the Center for the Study of Democracy, Center for Information, Democracy & Citizenship at the American University in Bulgaria, and non-governmental organizations. Important topics were discussed regarding dialogue with government organizations, national security aspects, and engaging young people through gamification in the form of hackathons and other activities.

CoDE is a three-year project launched with the goal of exploring and analyzing the information space in Bulgaria. The project runs from 2023 to 2026 with the support of the America for Bulgaria Foundation. CoDE Project aims to consolidate best practices, develop tools and conduct trainings, create an effective ecosystem, and demonstrate it through hackathons and exercises.

More information about the project: https://iict.bas.bg/code/
Contact: codenetwork@googlegroups.com