

# Climate Conspiracies in the Western Balkans: Widely Imported and Persistently Repeated



Conspiracy theories and climate disinformation in Europe and in the Western Balkan region

Common features of climate disinformation in the Western Balkan countries

Channels for spreading Western Balkans climate disinformation

**July 2024**

# Climate Conspiracies in the Western Balkans: **Widely Imported and Persistently Repeated**

Elaborated by

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## Executive Summary

The topic of climate is fertile soil for spreading disinformation. Denying the existence of global warming, conspiracy theories claiming the climate change is a tool in the hands of secret societies or powerful individuals in order to control or harm the populations, allegations that human influence on the climate is not as big as scientists claim it is, are just some of the narratives identified behind the sea of climate disinformation. They can all be found in the Western Balkans media and online platforms in the languages native to the region. Lately, there is also a tendency to deny the benefits of the electric vehicles, renewable sources of energy and other global warming counter-measures, depicting them as dangerous or unreasonable. The roots of this latest topical wave of climate related disinformation is a clear import from abroad.

Climate skepticism, twisted interpretations and manipulations striving to dispute scientifically based reality of climate change has deep roots in the Western Balkans - North Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo - spreading climate disinformation follows the pace and the trends already existing in the European Union.

Climate disinformation narratives circulating in the EU are usually copied by the local conspiracy theory perpetrators and spread through various channels, but mostly on the online platforms. The three most frequent climate conspiracy theories used for spreading climate disinformation cover:

- Chemtrails or the white trails in the sky left by the airplanes and used to intoxicate the people on the ground, followed by

- High Frequency Active Auroral Research Programme (HAARP) – repeatedly blamed for weather manipulation and seen as the main cause for poor or unfavorable weather conditions, such as floods, fires, droughts or hail-falls, and finally
- the claim that climate change does not exist at all and that it has been invented as an excuse to introduce measures to control the population.

In all of the Western Balkan countries there are networks of accounts, most of them anonymous or fake, regularly sharing climate disinformation content. The majority of climate disinformation circulating throughout the region represent direct or adjusted copies of the same content shared abroad, and smaller portion is fabricated by local conspiracy theorists. The tendency to cross-reference climate disinformation with ones on other topics is noticed in most of the countries in the region. Such is the case of mixing climate and Covid-19 pandemic disinformation. The origin of the imported climate conspiracy theories circulating throughout the Western Balkans can be traced from all over the world, but they usually begin their existence in the USA, China, Russia or the Western European countries.

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## Introduction

Climate change is the most important challenge planet Earth faces. The survival of mankind is directly dependent on limiting the planet's warming, including the increased emissions of greenhouse gases and the ramifications thereafter. Today's actions will shape the future of the planet, and countries must commit to securing balanced climate environment and a safe planet for future generations.

The direction our planet has embarked upon today is deeply concerning. According to the data of the [World Meteorological Organization](#), 2023 was the warmest year up to date, while the global mean temperature was about 1.45°C above the 1900 average.

For the academic community, as well as for most of humanity, it is crystal clear that climate change, especially since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the industrial revolution, is under the direct influence of man-made activities. Albeit, climate change is also owed to natural intrinsic or acquired processes such as solar cycle modulations and volcanic eruptions, but much more on the anthropogenic factor accountable for the excessive use of fossil fuels, destructive and merciless deforestation, land re-use and development, food production, waste management and industrial growth.

According to the [latest report](#) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC](#) dated 2023, man-made climate change causes rapid changes in the atmosphere, oceans, cryosphere (parts of the Earth where the water is solid, including glaciers, iced ground, ice of seas, lakes and rivers, ice sheets etc.) and biosphere, thereby impacting many weather and climate extremes in all regions

worldwide and causing widely spread negative effects, as well as losses and damages for nature and mankind. Therefore, greenhouse gas emissions must be limited as to control the increase of average temperature, as the only way to avoid the worst climate scenarios.

## Methodology

This report aims to reveal the most frequent disinformation related to the topic of climate change in the Western Balkan countries. All contents debunked by specialized fact-checkers from the six countries – North Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo – were analyzed within the period 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024.

The research aimed at revealing the most frequent climate change related disinformation and conspiracy theories – how often they were shared, who were they created by and how were they received by the wider public.

The archives of fact-checkers in all countries were searched for this study, including Vistinomer.mk from North Macedonia, Raskrinkavanje.rs, Istinomer.rs and Fakenews.rs from Serbia, Raskrinkavanje.me from Montenegro, Raskrinkavanje.ba from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faktoje.al from Albania and Hibrid.info and Kallxo from Kosovo. 134 pieces of content (or 137 if Kosovo is included) from these websites related to climate change, carbon emissions and bad weather conditions used for creating disinformation were analyzed, including the content revealed and debunked by fact-checkers. The analyzed content was also categorized according to the narratives used.

At the same time, accounts of conspiracy theory creators on the social network Facebook were analyzed, as well as websites specialized in fabricating and spreading disinformation in countries where such web sites exist. The content of their articles, their Facebook posts, groups and networks for disseminating climate change disinformation were also examined. The report also considered the scope of fake news circulating in the region, how much of the content was locally generated and how much was imported from other countries, including



the possibilities of overlap of the same disinformation among creators from the different countries in the region.

## Climate change and disinformation

The warnings reiterated every year by the United Nations, supported with reports by the academic community, clearly identify the dangers of climate change. Nevertheless, policies intended to limit carbon dioxide emissions and mitigate the effects encounter resistance by a large part of the public.

According to the [research](#), this resistance is partly due to those who do not want to invest in alternative sources of energy, like the fossil fuel based industry. To a large extent, this resistance comes from climate skeptics or those who believe that mankind cannot influence climate change and that scientific research is fake. They generate conspiracy theories about individuals, usually public figures like businessmen [Bill Gates](#), George Soros, the Head of the World Economic Forum Klaus Schwab or powerful groups and organizations such as the United Nations, liberals or others who, allegedly, use climate change as a tool for controlling the population, producing diseases and pandemics or control weather conditions and make disasters and catastrophes. Undoubtedly, the rhetoric used by the generators of conspiracy theories reject science and the work and role played by scientists within society.

Generally speaking, conspiracy theories are widespread and present in almost every segment of social life. The simplest [definition](#) says that a conspiracy theory is a belief that an event or situation is the result of a secret plan made by powerful people. Typically, they are pretty ridiculous and completely incredible, with no evidence supporting their claims. Quite often all counter-evidence and explanations proving the opposite is regularly discarded. Sometimes, the level they reach, as is the case with climate change conspiracies, can be an obstacle for taking positive and fact-based action, pushing people

further away from environmental initiatives, but also [undermining the confidence](#) in science and democracy in general.

Conspiracy theories emerge and circulate in periods during specific global events causing tension, anxiety or uncertainty among the population. In the last five years the world experienced several such events like the Covid-19 pandemic, the wars in Ukraine and in Gaza, both remaining highly exploited topics and generators of conspiracy theories.

### Conspiracy theories and climate change in Europe and in the Western Balkans region

The uncertainty stemming by climate change provides fertile soil for the circulation of disinformation. Skeptics find it difficult to believe that ordinary people with their habitual behavior can, in fact, contribute to consequences capable of devastating the world. In the [European Union](#) climate change related disinformation has many forms, from complete denial of its existence to the claims that climate change is a product of some larger and highly organized activities, also secret and in favor of powerful individuals or secret societies. The warnings of the scientists are also deemed exaggerated and not requiring an imposition of such urgent measures. In April 2024, one of the most widely spread fake stories appearing in the [European Union](#) claimed that the Dubai extreme floods were caused by the HAARP project, cloud seeding, aircraft chemical spraying or the alleged geo-engineering.

Most of the stories already proven as fakes or incorrect by independent fact-checking organizations in the EU seem to follow the pattern of the so-called [new](#)

[denial](#), directed towards electric vehicles, renewable sources of energy and other global warming counter-measures, displaying them as dangerous, more polluting than internal combustion vehicles or unreasonable. Fake news generators in the EU have notably diverted their attention from past claims that global warming is not realistic and that the emission of greenhouse gases does not affect the mankind, to claiming that global warming effects are beneficial or harmless, climate solutions offered do not work and science and climate fluctuations cannot be trusted.

In addition, QAnon, an extreme right-wing conspiracy theory movement from 2017 [uses](#) climate-related disinformation in several ways. In 2019, QAnon, for the first time, suggested its followers should re-examine the climate topic, calling the [Paris Agreement](#) yet another scam to make taxpayers comply and make politicians more affluent. Around the same period, one can note that the social network groups actively spreading pandemic-related disinformation were the same as those denying the existence of climate change. Very often the hashtag QAnon can be seen in climate related posts. The rise of this movement advanced the dissemination of climate related disinformation, along with the propaganda against the vaccines, and even more significant, undermined the public trust in the science and scientific evidence.

Climate skepticism and the use of distorted manipulative interpretations in order to dispute the science-based reality of changing climate, has deep roots in the Western Balkans. North Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo follow the European Union trends in spreading climate disinformation.

## Albania

Denying the existence of climate change and the contribution of carbon dioxide on the greenhouse effect, along with the alleged abuse of HAARP by mean-spirited groups and individuals to manipulate the weather, including disinformation about poisoning people with toxic-spraying planes are the three main conspiracy theories circulating in Albania.

Just like in most of the countries from the region, much of the disinformation spreads through already created accounts on social media networks. Many of them are fake, and some are just [names](#) that are [repeated](#) in many posts well-[known](#) to fact-checkers. Here, just like in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we can find accounts with very [similar names](#) copying them or generating similar contents implying they have been created by [one and the same person](#). Linking several fake news accounts enables their manipulations in reaching large circle of people.

All of these accounts regularly post disinformation on various topics, including climate change. They have regular followers, hence their posts have dozens of shares and hundreds of likes. These accounts are active in the comments as well, sharing their “arguments” thereby offering new “evidence” for their claims for the purpose of attracting a larger public and increasing their influence.

The unfavorable weather conditions in Albania and in the neighboring countries are the reason why the accounts spreading climate disinformation in this country will be able to repeat many times over the well-known conspiracy theory about HAARP – the tool in the hands of the rich and powerful modifying our climate to bring about poor weather conditions and accidents. Such disinformation occurred in Albania mostly after the floods in [Greece](#), [Dubai](#) and

Italy, even the [Philippines](#), reiterating the conspiracy theory they were manipulated with the use of the HAARP system, and some of them were even connected with conspiracy theories about the [U.S. Army](#).

The conspiracy theory related to climate change mostly used in the world – denying its existence - is a frequent topic of fake news generators in Albania.



*Photo: Faktoje fact-check of the claim on the non-existence of climate change*

The fact-checkers from Faktoje.al have debunked numerous disinformation presenting climate change as [fake](#). Using different means, such as [manipulation](#) of [photographs](#) and [videos](#), altering context of information etc., they create contents to delude readers and claim the existence of a secret agenda of a group of powerful people or governments working behind the backs of the mankind and using climate change as an excuse to produce [floods](#), [fires](#), droughts and other accidents with their tools. The popular disinformation that [carbon](#)

[dioxide](#) is, in fact, not harmful and that plants require for the photosynthesis has been reiterated several times.

In Albania, the famous bicycle race Giro d'Italia and the prominent football player Cristiano Ronaldo were used for spreading conspiracy theories, too, this time connected with the white trails in the sky or the chemtrails – one of the favorite disinformation stories related to the climate. The unusual trail of the aircraft recording the bicycle race proved to be a good opportunity for to convince people that someone does not have their interest at heart and is spraying them from above. Consequently, the well-known theory about planes full with barrels with different chemicals that, supposedly, were abused by powerful individuals or groups to “spray” the population with toxins was circulated yet again.



Photo: Debunked disinformation on chemtrails

Similar narratives are present in Albania just like in the other countries in the region in terms of climate disinformation. This is owed to the fact that most of the disinformation in Albania – like in the other Western Balkan countries – has been taken over from abroad, not only from the region, but also Europe and further away. Main circulation channels in this country are the online platforms being also used for generating fake accounts and groups for disseminating disinformation.

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

Climate disinformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina usually deals with the topic of chemtrails, the popular conspiracy theory about spraying and intoxicating the population as well as influencing weather conditions with HAARP, but also by denying climate change. Apart from the several [websites](#) sharing climate disinformation, the country also has a network of online platform accounts, mostly fake, sharing climate conspiracy theories and thereby extending their reach. Quite visible is also the existence of accounts with very similar names disseminating same content.

The network of disinformation disseminators with fake names is spread throughout the entire region. Names from Macedonia, Serbia or Montenegro could be noted as friends of these accounts. The fake information posts circulating the network receive hundreds of comments as well as hundreds, and even thousands, [shares](#). Most of the climate disinformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is copied from abroad, especially from the countries in the region, and some are created by local conspiracy theorists.



In this country, as in other countries in the region, unusual occurrences and [phenomena](#) render an opportunity for generating disinformation, misleading the public to draw wrong non-evidence-based conclusions.



*Facebook post claiming that the weather has been influenced with geo-engineering and abuse of the HAARP system*

In May 2024, Aurora Borealis or Northern Lights was visible from Europe and North America and the inhabitants from the region could also see it. This inspired the conspiracy theory generators to spread disinformation about the phenomenon related to two already well-known fakes – denying the existence

of climate change and the abuse of HAARP. For them, the appearance of Aurora Borealis in this part of the world was, on the one hand, evidence that climate change was brought about by natural processes and that mankind with its activities did not contribute to the increased emission of CO<sup>2</sup> and, furthermore, has nothing to do with it. On the other hand, the Aurora Borealis phenomenon is seen as a consequence of HAARP, the tool for manipulating the weather in the hands of mankind or more specially, the powerful groups and individuals with a hidden agenda.

RASKRINKAVANJE.BA    PROVERA TAČNOSTI    ČLANCI    MEDIJI    PRIJAVITE ČLANAK

**f** **HAARP nije uzrokovao polarnu svjetlost u maju**  
**x**

Ova analiza je označena kao: **Provjera tačnosti**

Na društvenim mrežama i u nekim medijima objavljene su insinacije da je polarna svjetlost koja se vidjela u noći između 10. i 11. maja bila vještački izazvana. To nije tačno.




Foto: Wikimedia Commons:Benjamin0807

Aurora borealis, ili sjeverna polarna svjetlost, bila je vidljiva širom Evrope i Sjeverne Amerike u noći između 10. i 11. maja 2024. Fotografije ovog fenomena masovno su se dijelile na društvenim mrežama. Zajedno s njima, dijelile su se i sumnje da je riječ o prirodnoj pojavi.

Na Facebooku je 11. maja podijeljena objava u kojoj se nagađa da je polarnu svjetlost izazvao "geoinženjering i nekakvi sistemi tipa HAARP". Objava sadrži kolaž od dvije fotografije Sunca, a u ispisima na engleskom jeziku tvrdi se da je jedna autentična, a druga ne. Na kolažu je i poster na kome se najavljuje HAARP-ovo istraživanje između 8. i 10 maja ove godine.

Polarna svjetlost nad Balkanom? Saharski pijesak? Čitav život živim tu a za to sam prvi put čuo u zadnju godinu dana. Prije će biti geoinženjering i nekakvi sistemi tipa HAARP. Možda testiranje za projekt Blue Beam? Ne znam. Ali u ovu zvaničnu priču, ne vjerujem.

*Fact-check in Raskrinkavanje.ba debunking the HAARP disinformation*

The white trails behind the airplanes - chemtrails, according to the conspiracy theorists or contrails according to the scientific community – are a never-ending source for spreaders of climate disinformation. In this period, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, they were the most frequently shared climate disinformation. Almost every white trail appearing in the sky was an occasion for reiterating the theories that [spraying](#) was performed for the purpose, according to conspiracy theorists, of undertaking depopulation as to [control](#) the population or to influence its behavior, but also to cause changes of [weather conditions](#). They believe that the globalists, Satanists and plotters against the rest of the world were doing it, and even a [list](#) of bacteria, viruses, fungi, metal and other substances were created to, allegedly, spray the substances from the aircrafts.

Changing the weather by using the [HAARP](#) is yet another conspiracy theory connected to the poor weather conditions that hit Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia in July 2023. HAARP ([High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program](#)) is, in fact, a joint project of different partners, industry, US Defense Department and numerous universities throughout the USA researching the critical ramifications of weather related occurrences.

In this period in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the circulators of disinformation used events that occurred outside of the country, within the region or in the [world](#), as grounds for fake claims and with no evidence whatsoever to analyze events and spread panic and mistrust among people. The information that in March 2024, in the Brazilian city Rio de Janeiro, a record heat index of 62.3 degrees Celsius measured, was used to spread disinformation that, in fact, the air temperature in the city was so high although these measurements are completely different.

Just like in the other countries in the region, in Bosnia and Herzegovina attempts were made to link several conspiracy theories as to generate new disinformation and guide the attention of the public in the wrong direction. Climate change was also usually connected to the Covid-19 pandemic and vaccination, but also to a number of everyday conditions such as [headaches](#), exhaustion, depression...

In recent times, disinformation was connected with the whooping cough (pertussis) pandemic in the region from the beginning of 2024. It was claimed that whooping cough pandemic [appeared because of the spraying](#) from the air, although numerous scientists and medical professionals had been warning that the return of forgotten diseases was a consequence of avoiding children's immunization due to the influence of the anti-vax movement also present in the country. The current war between Israel and Palestine is also put in context of spreading conspiracies on chemtrails and air poisoning. Specifically, a content on the online platform claiming not only the planes, but also [missiles](#) contain various chemicals being sprayed and leaving trails in the sky.

Climate disinformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is also connected with global celebrities subject of conspiracies in many areas. In that respect, the name of [Bill Gates](#) is widely used as being accused for planning to cut down millions of hectares of forest as means of fighting climate change (by burying them and not letting them emitting CO<sub>2</sub>). Usually, claims involving US celebrities or billionaires originate from the American conspiracy theorists transmitted by local media in the region.

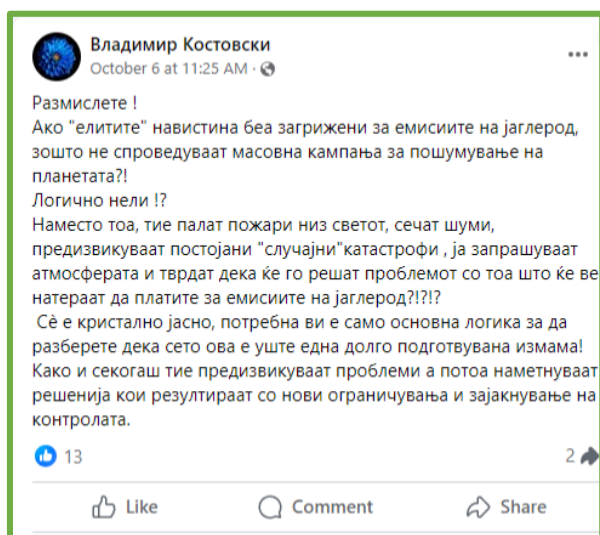
The screenshot shows a news article layout. On the left, there is a large portrait of Bill Gates. To the right of the portrait is a sidebar titled "• NAJNOVIJE" (Most Recent). It contains three news items, each with a large number (1, 2, 3) and a small thumbnail image. The main article headline reads: "Bil Gejts planira da poseće milione hektara šuma kako bi se 'borio protiv klimatskih promena'". Below the headline, it says "By Nulta Tačka" and "31. Avgusta 2023.". The article text starts with "Bil Gejts i dalje pokušava da 'spase planetu' ...". The sidebar items are: 1. "SVE VESTI SVI bi trebali da budu zabrinuti jer NOVI zakon EU" with a blue target icon; 2. "Severna Irska: Severna Irska: Policija hapsi članove Nove Irske Republikanske Armije -" with a photo of a person; 3. "Nešto se dešava! Nova studija otkriva porast slučajeva PAKA kod" with a photo of a person.

Photo: Disinformation on Bill Gates planning to cut millions of hectares of forest

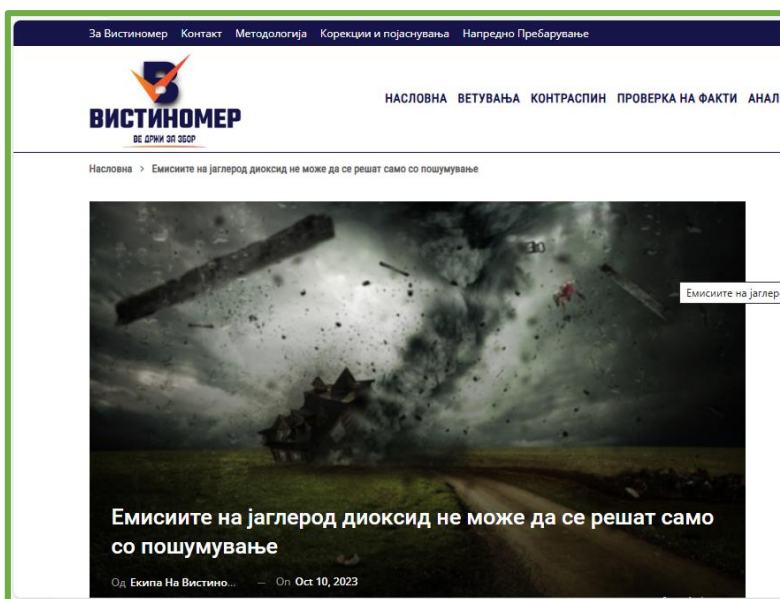
The analyses of the fact-checkers from Bosnia and Herzegovina lead to the conclusion that the purveyors of disinformation are quite active and use similar narratives as in the other countries in the region. Most of the disinformation is copied from abroad, a smaller portion is generated within the country and shared on the social networks by using these already operational groups and channels for disseminating disinformation.

## North Macedonia

Most of the climate disinformation spread in North Macedonia is connected with the chemtrails or HAARP conspiracy theories, too, but also with the conviction that climate change is either nonexistent or [artificially caused](#) by the activities of individuals or groups.



*Photo: Content claiming climate change was invented to control the population*



*Photo: Truthmeter debunking the disinformation*

Most of the disinformation is inspired or copied from abroad, while some is generated by local sources as a result of the events happening within, but also outside the country. The authors of these posts are usually individuals, some of them with false or hidden identities. Quite obvious is a repetition of similar posts by the same person, as is the habit of spreading climate disinformation on same subtopic. Perpetrators frequently share disinformation on their own accounts, but also in groups on online platforms, who then play an important role in wide circulation of disinformation.

Notably, the groups are intentionally established with [names precisely suggesting](#) that this is a place where one can find global conspiracies unmasking the actions of the elites against the interests of the people. Targeting specific groups is also obvious, for example [farmers](#) who are especially sensitive to climate topics, and can act as suitable interlocutors in spreading such disinformation. The spring ice phenomenon and the damages inflicted to early Spring season fruits, for example, was explained with the HAARP system.

One of the most exploited conspiracy theories in North Macedonia is the chemtrails created by the aircraft in the air and believed to be “chemical trails”, allegedly composed of chemical and biological agents for “evil purposes”. Perpetrators claim white trails in the sky are “[toxic](#)” and reach the soil and people easier with the rain.



*Photo: Truthmeter analysis revealing a story of a medical doctor being used in spreading chemtrails disinformation*

The chemical trail disinformation is inevitably intertwined with [HAARP](#), manipulated by individuals or groups. This popular theory is about a group of

powerful people possessing formidable weaponry and using it to implement its hidden agenda to spray population and nature with disease causing toxins. The “proof” for this was the white trails planes left behind in the sky. According to conspiracy theorists, HAARP was designed to produce earthquakes and other natural disasters, as well as artificial [changes of weather conditions](#).

Disinformation in North Macedonia also follows the trend noted in the region, where specific occurrences in society are related to the existence or influence of climate change, but with no proof whatsoever. The [whooping cough](#) pandemic declared in many regions in the country at the beginning of the year was an excuse to connect it with the chemtrails conspiracies. The conspiracies on the means of transmission of viruses and diseases, many times misused during the Covid-19 pandemic, were now applied to whooping cough, while the increased number of patients was “explained” through the claim of intoxication with dangerous solutions sprayed from airplanes.

Also, in North Macedonia the actual impact and existence of climate change in general was denied, assigning unrealistic and unscientific reasons. Notably, disinformation linked with conspiracy theories spreads in times when diseases, epidemics, bad weather conditions, rainfalls, fires or similar [disasters](#) occur in the country, in the region or in the world. The country was not circumvented by the conspiracy theories generated by [QAnon](#), putting them in the direction of climate change and the already known powers of the HAARP that caused the floods in New York from October 2023. In fact, they were produced on purpose to save the children kidnapped by pedophile networks and kept in New York tunnels, which is one of the most exploited QAnon conspiracy theories.



The conclusion drawn from the Truthmeter analyses is that the same narratives used by the conspiracy theorists in the region are present in North Macedonia, including the denial of climate change, smearing public figures, environmentalists and activists, and disputing scientific evidence proving the existence of global warming. Climate change related disinformation spread on online platforms, usually through posts of accounts with false names. Most of the posts are copied from similar posts from the wider region or Europe, while a smaller portion is locally produced disinformation.

## Serbia

Most of the climate disinformation conspiracies spread in Serbia refers to denial of the existence of climate change, airplane spraying and poisoning - chemtrails – and a smaller share of HAARP related disinformation.



Photo: [Istinomer.rs](https://istinomer.rs) fact-check debunking chemtrails disinformation

In this country, the ratio of imported and locally produced disinformation is about the same. Apart from online platforms, climate conspiracies are also published on separate [websites](#) presented as media, although [dedicated to spreading disinformation](#). They take over disinformation from similar foreign websites on regular basis, but also generate their own, usually inspired by various local events. All of that is done under the pretense of making “fair information” available to the citizens about the events in the country, the region and in the world.

There are many platform accounts fact-checkers recognize as regular sharers of climate disinformation. These posts become viral quickly and are shared online and on Viber groups specialized for conspiracies, reaching [several hundreds](#), even thousand shares.

In Serbia some events in the society or natural phenomena are frequently used in creating disinformation. In that respect, [weather conditions](#) or unusual [events related to weather conditions](#) – heavy rainfalls or floods – are abused to manipulate people. In summer 2023, when a supercell storm gripped the country, new disinformation was shared on daily basis about alleged groups and individuals [manipulating with weather conditions](#) for the purpose of creating disasters. The culprit on call, according to the conspiracy theorists, was HAARP, used to [generate storms](#), while the population’s fear of the floods and damage inflicted by the bad weather conditions was, in fact, used to disseminate false information.

In this country, as in most of the countries in the region, [disinformation is cross-referenced](#), especially with topics most sensitive to disinformation such as the climate and Covid-19 pandemic. The disinformation about the vaccines and

their alleged detrimental effects are connected with climate events and then with claims that such connections would lead to new massive vaccinations or [new restrictions](#). Especially noticeable are speculations about famous individuals, who, supposedly, have the power to impose these freedom restrictions to the rest of the world.

A screenshot of a social media post. At the top, there is a red banner with the text "Manipulisanje činjenicama" and a yellow banner with "Neutemeljeno". The background image shows two wooden canoes on a dry, cracked, sandy beach. Below the image, there is a white text box with a red background containing the following text: "Izvorni članak je objavljen 15.05.2024. (Nulta tačka) Portali: Klimatske promene ne postoje, plan moćnika je depopulacija". Below this, there is a red banner with white text: "Klimatski naučnik iz Velike Britanije Bil Mek Gvajer ovih dana je na meti tviteraša širom sveta jer je napisao da je velika smrtonosna pandemija jedini način da se brzo prepolovi emisija štetnih gasova. Njegovu izjavu mnogi su protumačili kao poziv na masovnu depopulaciju i „odstrel“ čovečanstva, među njima i portali u Srbiji poput Nulte tačke ili Srbin Info. Reč je o sajtovima koji tradicionalno negiraju klimatske promene sugerišući, bez jednog jedinog dokaza, da se iza priče o njima krije zavera moćnika da se desetkuje stanovništvo planete." Below the red banner, there is a white text box with black text: "Mek Gvajer, vulkanolog, klimatski naučnik i ekspert za prirodne katastrofe sa Univerzitetskog koledža u Londonu, napisao je nešto što su zagovornici teorija zavere o depopulaciji protumačili kao potvrdu svojih uverenja." At the bottom, there is a white text box with black text: "„Da budem brutalno iskren, kao jedini realan način da emisije gasova padnu brzo koliko bi trebalo da bismo izbegli katastrofalni klimatski slom, vidim smanjenje ljudske populacije pandemijom sa vrlo visokom stopom smrtnosti“, napisao je Mek Gvajer 11. maja u tvitu koji je u međuvremenu".

*Photo: Disinformation claiming climate change does not exist*

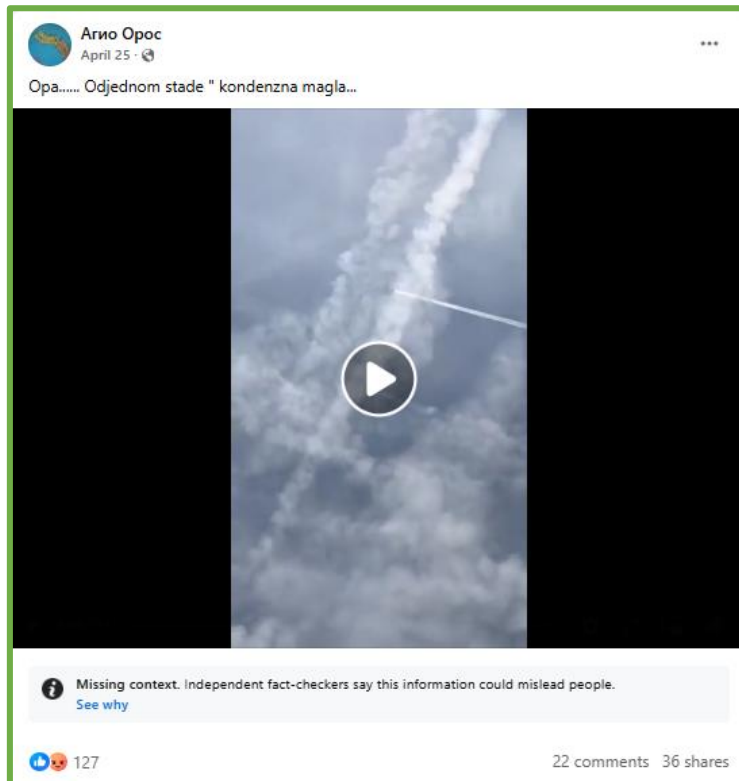
The manner of operation of the online platforms and the fast transmission of information creates additional conditions for climate conspiracies from proven global disinformation circulation channels to spread fast within the country. Such claims is, for example, climate change does not exist and the purpose of certain groups of powerful people is [depopulation](#) or downsizing the mankind. In that respect, a project designed by a group of Harvard scientists for releasing calcium carbonate cloud in the atmosphere, using a balloon, to find out more about the efficiency and risks related to solar geo-engineering, conspiracy

theorists assign to Bill Gates and the “globalist elite,” that, according to them, have invested millions in [spraying chalk in the stratosphere](#) in the fight against climate change. The disinformation claims that the experiment was performed above the Swedish city Kiruna, although truth has it that the Harvard scientists never implemented the planned project. Terms are mixed to generate confusion and to claim there is no climate change, but [weather change](#) or that global warming cannot exist in winter and when snowing. Also, the appearance of red color Aurora Borealis in the region, visible from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, was the [occasion](#) for stimulating conspiracy theories on the use of HAARP.

The analysis of climate change disinformation in Serbia leads to the conclusion that the same narratives can be found as in other parts of the Western Balkan region. Specific for the country is that almost half of the disinformation was generated locally, while the other half was imported from abroad, which was not the case with the other countries. Serbia has a wide network of on-line platform accounts publishing disinformation, but also special websites engaged in creating conspiracy theories.

## Montenegro

The most interesting topic for climate disinformation in Montenegro was denying its existence. Frequently shared are also famous chemtrails conspiracies and the manipulation with weather conditions through HAARP.



*Photo: Content sharing chemtrails conspiracy*

Most of the disinformation released in Montenegro, in fact, was taken over from the region, especially from Serbia. Websites sharing disinformation and presented as media are well-known to fact-checkers. They have their own supporters in the country, transmitting and sharing disinformation through their own accounts or through fake [online platform accounts](#).

Disinformation is usually shared through numerous accounts for the purpose of reaching as many different categories of user as possible. Quite often most of these [accounts](#) repeat topics on climate change, HAARP or chemtrails, indicating the fact that their existence and main goal is spreading disinformation deliberately.



Photo: Disinformation post about HAARP being abused to produce Aurora Borealis



Photo: Fact-check debunking this disinformation

The posts have dozens of shares and numerous comments, as well as lot of cross-sharing and cross-commenting between disinformation accounts with an aim to instigate and thereby direct the discussion into a desired direction.

Especially interesting is the disinformation related to climate change and its skillful connection with other disinformation topics and fake news such as the Covid-19 pandemic and vaccination. Disinformation from one or more topics

within a single post is cross-referenced to increase the level of drama and to confuse the readers even more. This is especially true for [merging the fake news](#) on aircraft spraying and Covid-19 pandemic or vaccination.

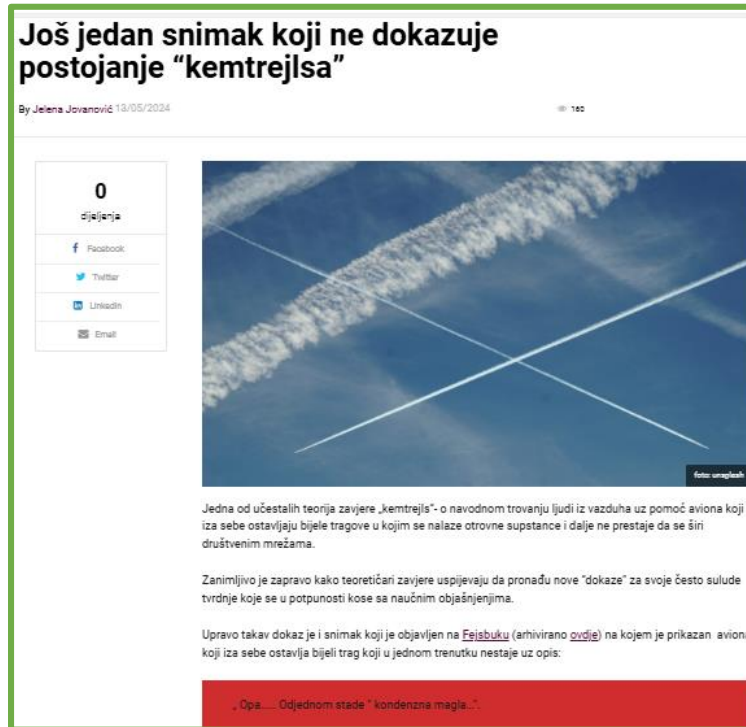


Photo: [Raskrinkavanje.me](#) fact-check on chemtrails disinformation

The frequently exploited topic about the white trails in the sky left by chemical spraying aircraft is now used as somewhat of a discovery that the Spanish government was spraying its citizens during the pandemic to avoid spreading Covid-19. Anti-vaxxers are never left without ideas, so they spread panic and disinformation that [vaccination](#) will be repeated in the upcoming period, but this time against climate change. The manipulation is even linked with a new term, climate [lockdown](#), or prohibited movement allegedly introduced by Israel due to high temperatures or that the United Nations will introduce [worldwide](#) lockdown due to climate change. Apparently, the term “lockdown” is not chosen

by chance, but because of the negative feelings of the population arising during the restrictions introduced in the course of the pandemic.

The reasons for spreading disinformation related to climate change in Montenegro are also connected to specific national events in the period analyzed. In the beginning of 2024, the appearance of whooping cough, a long-forgotten disease kept under control for decades with regular vaccinations of children, is now motivating disinformation spreaders to invent scenarios with no scientific evidence whatsoever. Hence, spraying from airplanes, according to their theories, is the reason for dispersing many diseases, now mentioned in the context of the [whooping cough phenomenon](#), again as a result of someone's alleged wishes to make the population sick.

The disinformation analyzed by the editorial staff of Raskrinkavanje.me pinpoints to the practice where many accounts on Facebook take over and share one and the same disinformation. Conspiracy theorists are eagerly following events from the [region](#) or the [world](#), especially if linked to weather conditions or [phenomena](#). Floods, fires, hail or similar weather conditions are frequent excuses to take over fakes released in other countries. Manipulating the weather through HAARP or geo-engineering instead of seeing them as climate change consequences, for conspiracy theorists are the reasons for the floods in China, Dubai or in Turkey.

The analysis of the fact-checks of Raskrinkavanje.me leads to the conclusion that the same climate disinformation narratives prevail in Montenegro as in the other countries in the region: the usual claims about [aluminum spraying](#) from planes, to [change the weather](#) with man-made meddling and [denying](#) climate change.



Spreading disinformation here is mainly done through online platforms, by various, and frequently fake, accounts. They publish posts usually taken over from abroad, and rarely locally generated.

## Kosovo

Climate change disinformation did not bypass Kosovo either. It spread equally on the online platforms and in the media, but most of the news was imported from abroad. Fact-checked posts on the topic in Kosovo are very limited in number. In the period covered (1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024), the archive of Hibrid.info has three fact-checks on the topic of climate. There, conspiracy theorists are dealing with the weather conditions in the region, claiming that they were brought about from man-made activities, not climate change. Hence, the presence of [Sahara sand](#) on the ground of the European continent last May

was used to disseminate disinformation that someone was scattering sand with machines for the purpose of polluting the air.



Photo: Disinformation that someone has scattered Sahara sand with a machine on the European continent

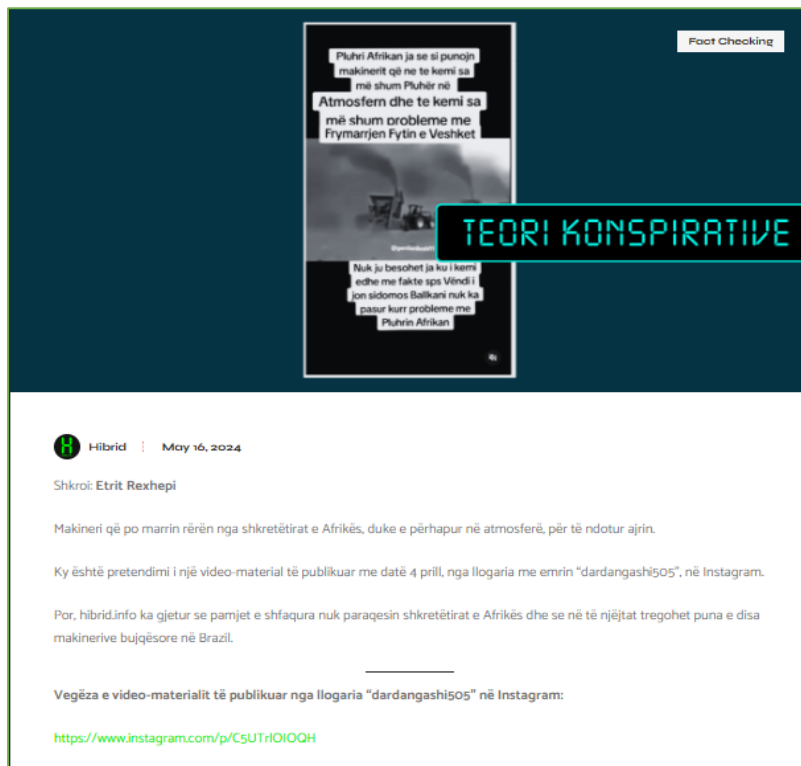
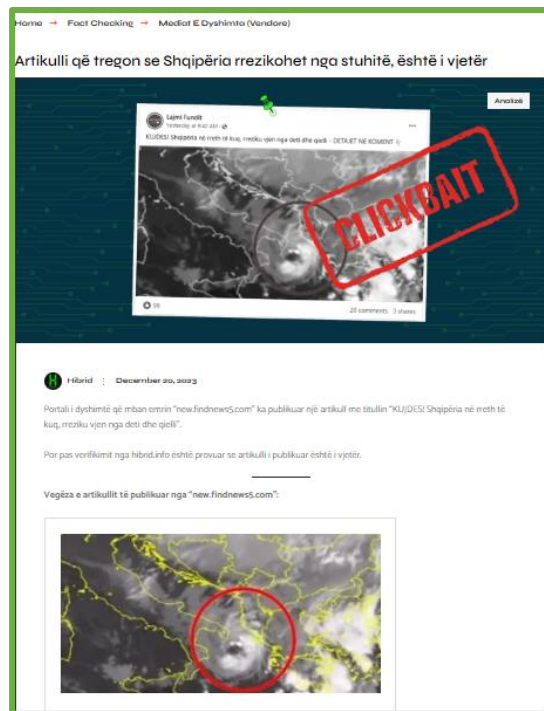


Photo: Fact-check debunking this disinformation

Fact-checkers discovered that old photographs from the [floods](#) in Albania were used to claim that the flood happened in Pristina.

For a more detailed analysis of the disinformation contents spreading in Kosovo, additional seven fact-checks from Hybrid, S Bunker and Kalzo were taken into consideration from the beginning of 2023 to the end of June 2024. Weather conditions continue to be the main topic of conspiracy theorists who present the photographs of [old floods](#) or weather conditions that happened [in other countries](#) as evidence of the current affairs in Kosovo.

HAARP is also an interesting topic for the conspiracy theorists from Kosovo. They use an illustration of a radar, falsely claiming that was a [machine](#) for producing storms, earthquakes and droughts, but also the reason for the [earthquakes](#) in Turkey in February 2023. In one post, the earthquakes and natural disasters were even identified as [Serbia's punishment](#) for not recognizing Kosovo.



*Photo: Fact-check debunking disinformation that weather conditions were deliberately provoked*

The analysis of the disinformation spread in Kosovo leads to the conclusion that the climate topic is not exploited frequently by local conspiracies. Most of the disinformation has been imported from abroad, usually from Albania, and very little has been locally generated. In this country, the online platforms and media are equally used to disseminate disinformation.

## Common features of climate disinformation in the Western Balkan countries

- White trails left by planes in the sky are toxic
- Mankind has no impact on the creation of carbon dioxide emissions
- There is no climate change, but weather change
- Floods are caused by HAARP
- If snow is falling, there is no global warming
- Measures against climate change are introduction into a new lockdown

This is just part of the sea of climate change related disinformation found in the Western Balkans.

White trails in the sky left behind planes. Some disappear quickly, but some remain longer. For conspiracy theorists that is an indicator that someone is using air transportation to spray the population with various chemicals. The [chemtrails](#) or the chemical trails theory is usually accompanied by a list of alleged chemicals used to poison mankind, and most frequently mentioned are barium, aluminum, human plasma, Covid-19 virus or vaccines against Covid. The application of chemtrails scenarios depends on the imagination of the conspiracy theorists, varying from manipulation with weather conditions, population control, pandemic dispersal or intentional illness and intoxication, to psychological influence of masses.

Chemtrails are narrowly linked to the theory regarding the abuse of the HAARP - High-Frequency Active Auroral Research Program – which is a joint project of different partners, industry, US Defense Department and numerous

universities throughout the USA, but also very often accused as the main culprit for causing floods, fires, droughts or hail.

It was exactly those kinds of events in the course of last year that were an excuse to create local climate disinformation and to disseminate the same or similar ones presented in two or more countries. The occurrence of [Aurora Borealis](#) in Europe and in the region was seen by the conspiracy theorists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, [Montenegro](#) and [Serbia](#) as a consequence of HAARP actions, the main wrongdoer also for the [supercell thunderstorm](#) in Serbia in 2023. In [North Macedonia](#), [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) and [Montenegro](#), on the other hand, the appearance of whooping cough in the beginning of 2024, a disease long-forgotten and kept under control for decades by means of regular vaccination of children, inspired the disseminators of disinformation to merge two conspiracy theories and to develop a scenario according to which the disease was a consequence of spraying toxins, viruses, chemicals etc. from planes. In [Montenegro](#) and in Albania, the [floods](#) in the [region](#) incited circulation of disinformation as to convince citizens that weather conditions resulted from secret weapons. Unlike other Western Balkan countries, the number of fact-checked climate articles in Kosovo is quite small. Usually those articles referred to the [poor weather conditions](#) in the region, claiming that they were man-made, not HAARP related, nor a consequence of climate change. Weather manipulation by some individuals or groups for their interests is one aspect of the climate conspiracies, claiming they were artificially created or man-made. The second aspect is that climate change does not exist at all, and that elite groups, assisted by scientists and politicians were inventing them to control the population.

## Western Balkan countries following and copying narratives present in Europe and the world for a long time

- Denying climate change
- Smearing public figures, environmentalists, activists
- Undermining trust in science, scientific evidence and work of scientists

Although conspiracy theorists sometimes have wild imaginations, and can be creative when having to invent new fabrications, science nevertheless, [has an answer](#) for all of them. Even disinformation spreaders know about the contrails formed as a result of mixing exhaust gasses with cold air. Scientists [explain](#) that contrails will not even appear if the air is dry, but if saturated with moisture, the white trails are persistent and may remain visible in the sky for a longer period. Climatologists agree and [prove](#) that climate change is a reality and even more realistic is mankind's influence in the creation of greenhouse gases and people are responsible for the entire global warming in the last 200 years. Human activities such as energy, industry, transport, urban planning, agriculture and land use are some of the main sectors causing greenhouse gases that warm the world quicker than ever before. The ramifications are apparent on daily basis from every spot on Earth in the form of intensive droughts, scarcity of water, fires, increased water level of seas, floods, polar ice melting, disastrous storms and decreased biodiversity.

## Channels for spreading climate disinformation in the Western Balkans

Online platforms are the main channel for sharing disinformation in general, including climate disinformation. There are networks of accounts in all Western Balkan countries, most of them fake, sharing conspiracies. To reach an ever wider public, they also share their content in online [groups](#) with names clearly indicating the kind of content expected to be encountered. The linguistic similarities in most of the countries in the region serve as an advantage for disinformation spreaders, whose account network spills over the borders easily. Those sharing disinformation from Serbia are quite often present in the circle of friends from North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina or Montenegro. The connection between the creators of climate disinformation in the entire region is confirmed by the fact that one and the same fake piece of news appears in similar time slots in three countries - [Montenegro](#), [Serbia](#) and [Albania](#). In Kosovo, for example, the use of online platforms, but also media, is almost the same for disseminating disinformation.

Most of the climate disinformation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Montenegro, Kosovo and Albania are copied from abroad, especially from countries from the region, and just a small part is generated by local conspiracy theorists. Original climate conspiracies are from all over the world, but mostly from the [USA](#), China, and Russia or Western European countries.

Serbia, on the other hand, is a particular example for two grounds. The first is that in this country almost half of the climate disinformation is locally generated. Unlike the other countries from the region where the news is spread on the online platforms, Serbia has specialized [websites](#) in the business of

creating disinformation. Much of the disinformation taken over by neighboring countries, in fact, are created from these [sites](#).

In most of the countries in the region, the tendency to [cross-reference disinformation](#) on various topics can be noted, such as climate change and the [Covid-19](#) pandemic. The fake news on vaccines and their detrimental effects are linked to events that result from climate change for which apparently new [massive vaccination](#) or new restrictions are required. Especially visible here is the use of speculations on famous individuals, allegedly having the power to impose these freedom restrictions on the whole world, such as the President of the World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab and his daughter [Nicole](#), being accused of stating that Covid-19 was just the pre-text into the new rules to be introduced due to climate change. This circle also includes eco-activist [Greta Thunberg](#) and the famous football player [Cristiano Ronaldo](#).

Quite often Greta Thunberg is target of disinformation spreaders and her statements are either taken out of context or twisted or misinterpreted. For example, her warning that climate change will wipe out entire humanity if we do not stop using fossil fuel in the next five years was taken out of context through claims that Thunberg said that humanity will be extinct within five years.

Also, the famous photograph of Cristiano Ronaldo extending support to the victims of the flood from his birth place, island Madeira, was abused for claiming that he, in fact, was warning that someone was spraying us from the sky.



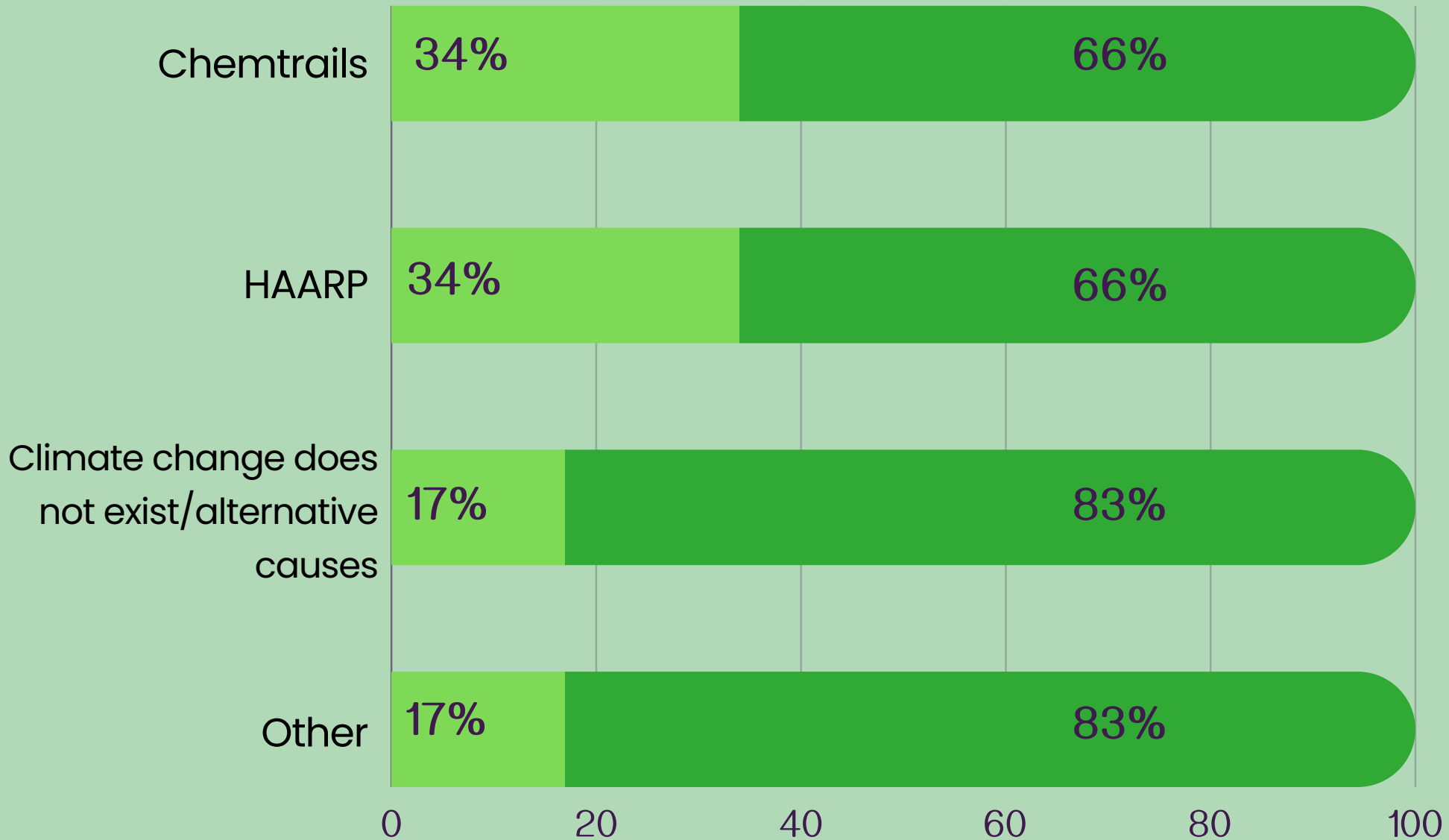
## Response of the growing trend of climate change disinformation

Spreading disinformation has a constantly growing trend and the European Commission has announced a [strong response](#) to disinformation, including climate change. In the latest report on climate risks from 2024, the European Commission announced monitoring and analysis of how these narratives enter the public sphere, how they influence citizen's opinion and behavior and announced re-examining the compliance of online platforms' company policies with the European legislation on digital services in concerning the support for scientifically based facts. [European Climate Pact](#) also published three booklets for awareness-raising concerning the scientific consensus that climate change was man-made, effective managing of disinformation and the importance of frequent and proper debunking on the online platforms, including the identification of conspiracies and recognizing the particularities of conspiratorial thinking and effective counter-strategies.

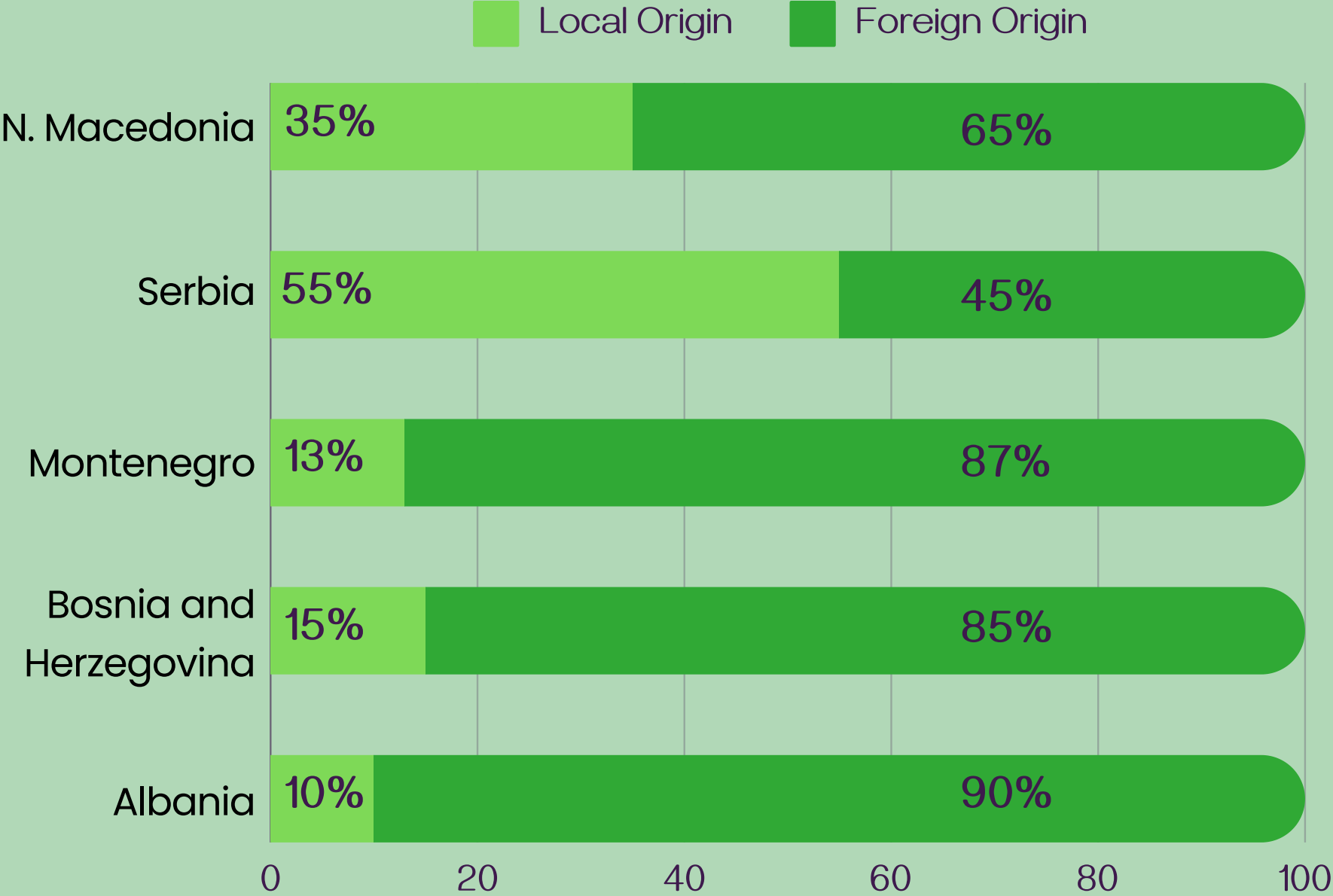
# Appendix 1: Ratio of climate disinformation from local and foreign origin

# Ratio of Climate Disinformation from Local and Foreign Origin by Topic - Western Balkans

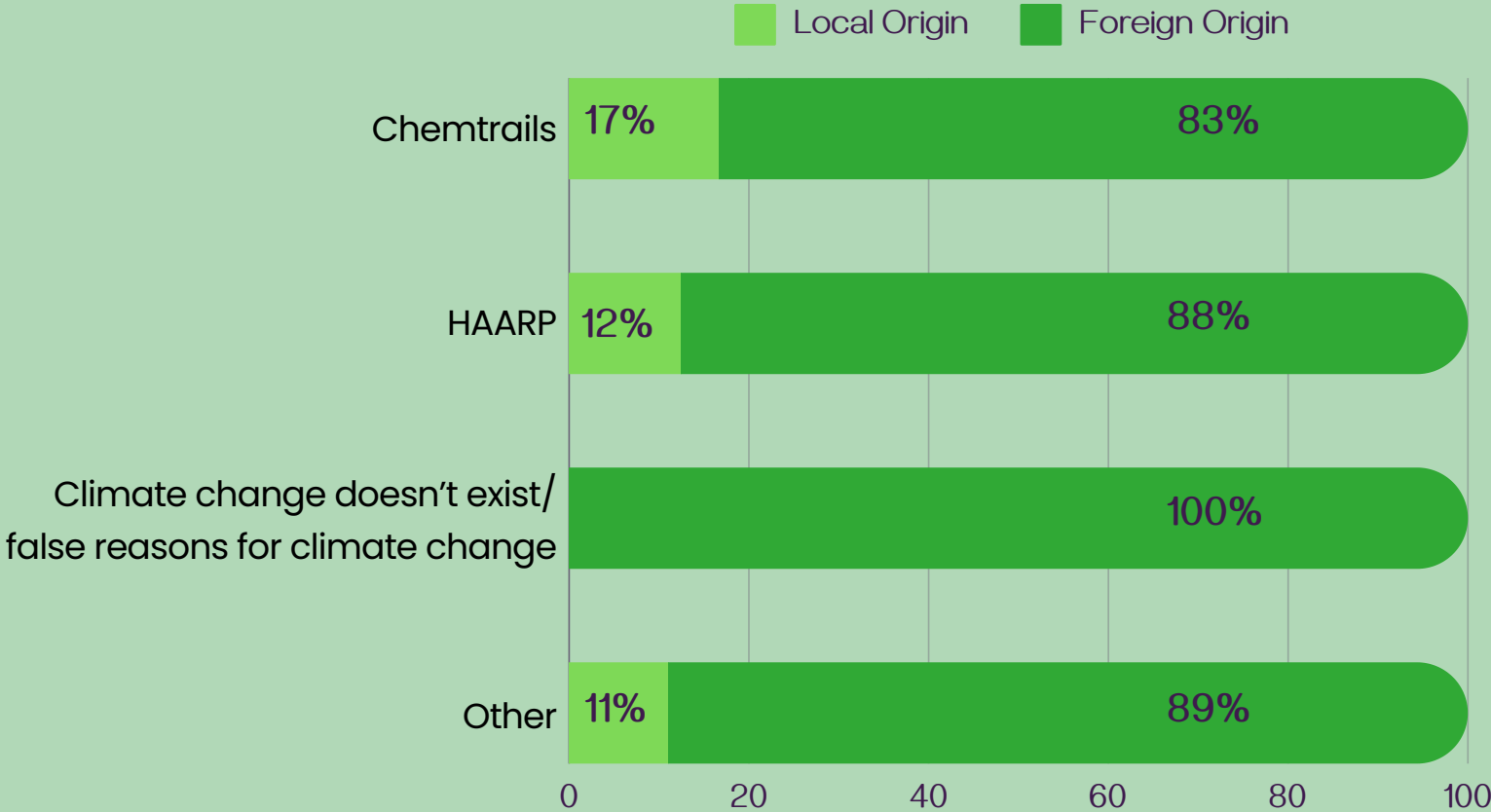
Local Origin Foreign Origin



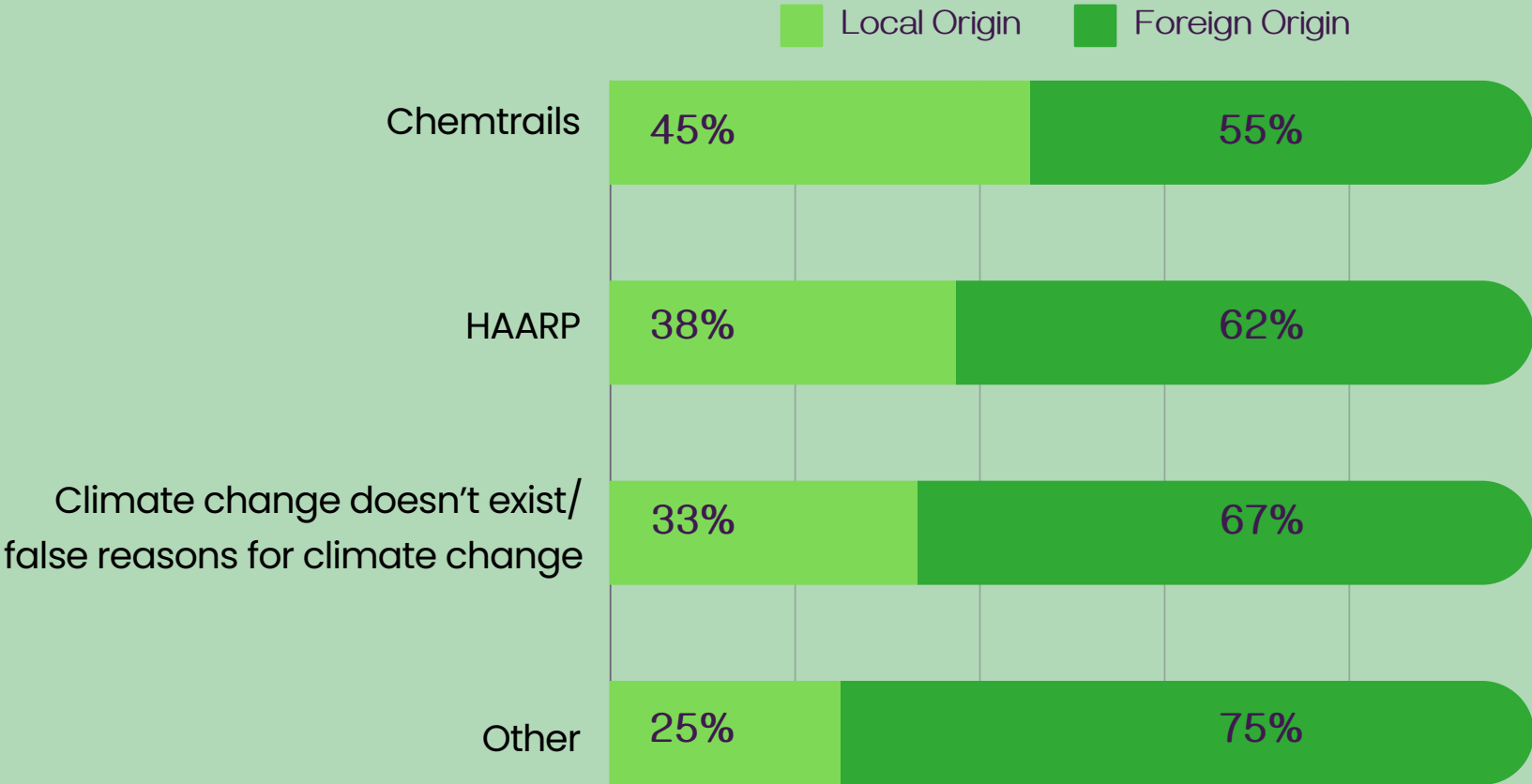
# Ratio of Climate Disinformation from Local and Foreign Origin by Country - Western Balkans



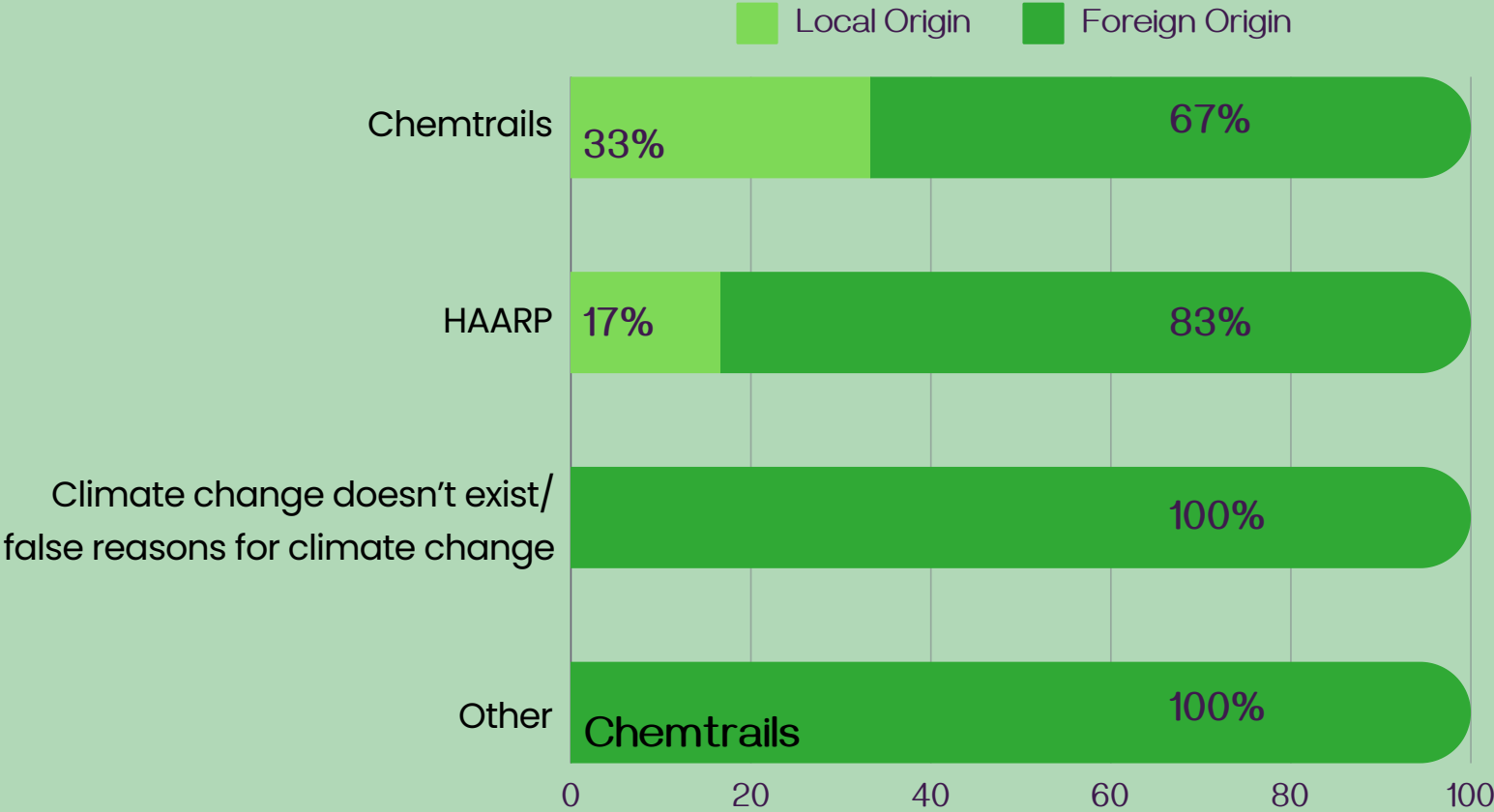
# Ratio of Climate Disinformation from Local and Foreign Origin - Albania



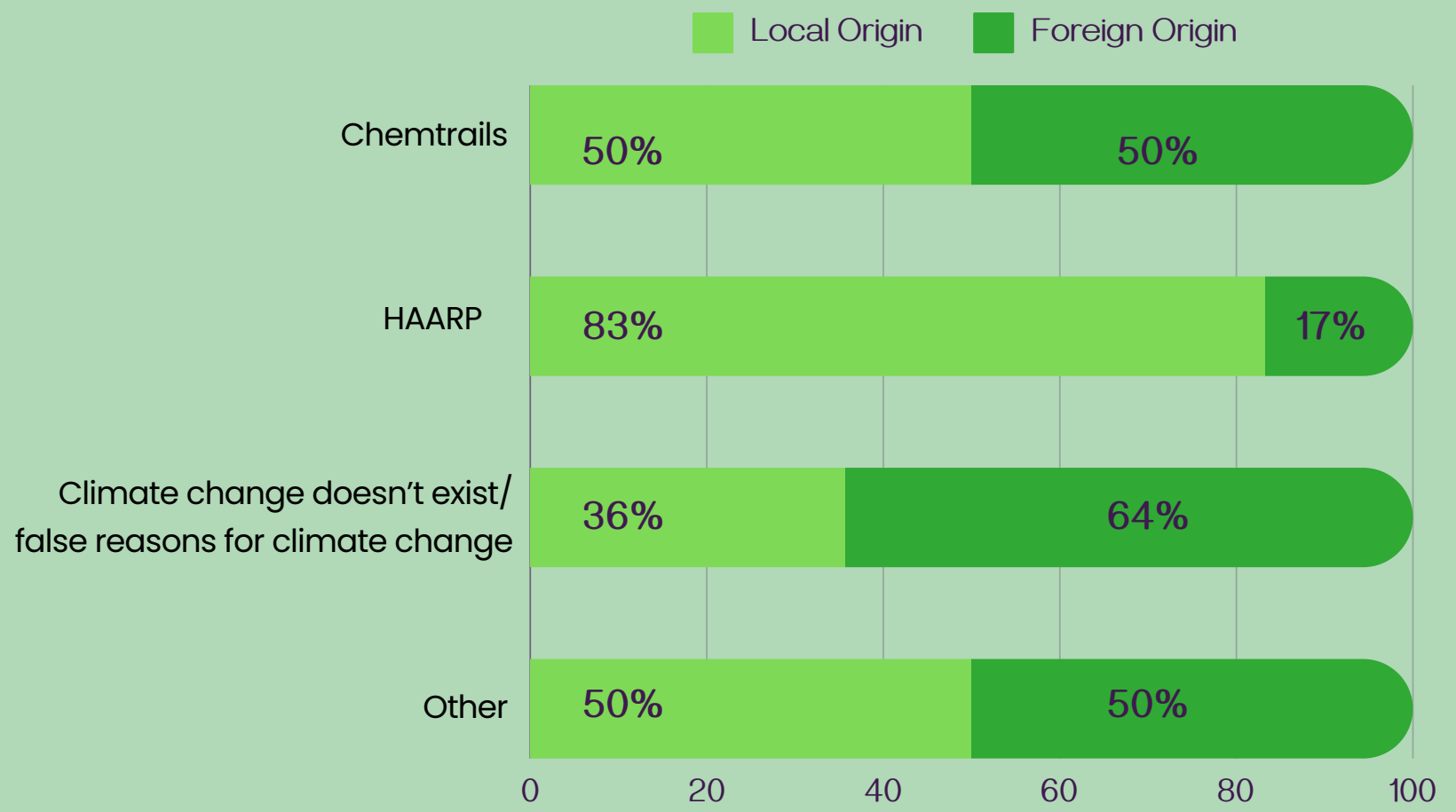
# Ratio of Climate Disinformation from Local and Foreign Origin - North Macedonia



# Ratio of Climate Disinformation from Local and Foreign Origin - Montenegro

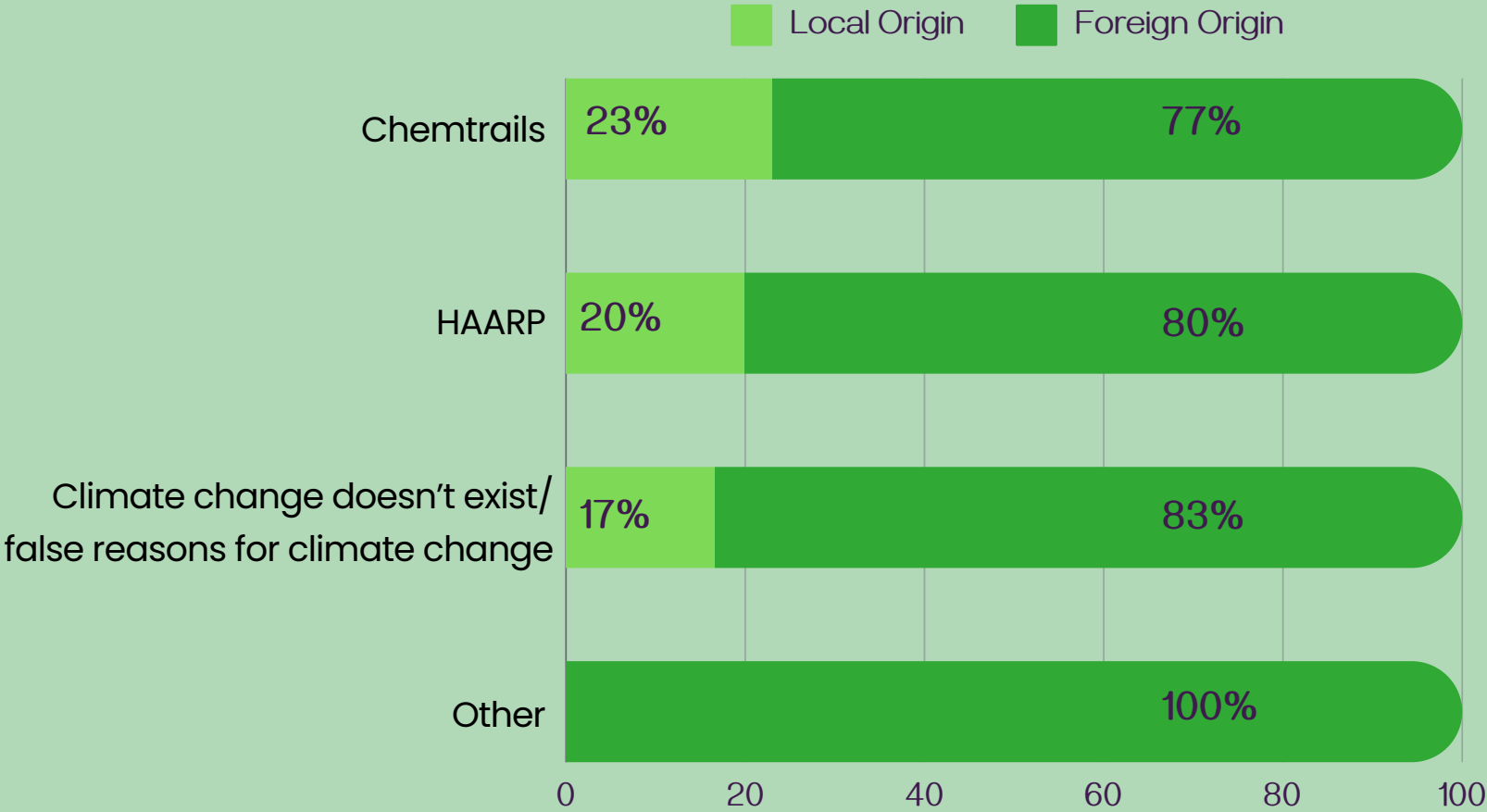


# Ratio of Climate Disinformation from Local and Foreign Origin - Serbia





# Ratio of Climate Disinformation from Local and Foreign Origin - Bosnia and Herzegovina



## Appendix 2: False claim - Fact

## FALSE CLAIM

Today they are especially diligent... don't be puzzled if you are sick and if it rains... the toxins must land on the soil and close to the people as soon as possible!

These clouds are not natural.  
You may have heard of HAARP.  
Did you notice the airplanes spraying toxins?

Two years ago I announced the next PLANdemia – Climate change.  
Two years later, EU farmer protests against globalists proves that the AGENDA has already been set in motion.  
This is just the beginning...

CLIMATE CHANGE ???  
THERE IS NO NATURAL CLIMATE CHANGE, BUT ARTIFICIAL CHANGE !!!  
HAARP SHOULD BE DESTROYED !!!,

Vrbas (town in Serbia) last night". The weather is HAARPastic. What about farmers, agriculture, fruit-growing. Those who do not know what is happening and what Satanists are doing will say that climate change is real, but if we know that Satanists have the equipment/technology to cause that and that they aim to make us completely dependent on them, then the story about climate change cannot fly

## FACT

**The post refers to the white lines left behind aircrafts - condensation trails known as contrails. They appear when the water vapor produced at high altitudes by aircraft engines freezes when released in cold air. They are not poisonous and do not cause sickness.**

**Unlike the claim of clouds not being natural, they are altocumulus clouds, made of a mixture of ice and water, giving them a more ethereal appearance.**

**Climate change is not a lie, nor "plandemia", nor is it a conspiracy. Climate change is a reality and it is much older than two years.**

**Up to 97 percent of the scientists researching climate worldwide agree climate change is real and led by man-made activities. There is a consensus on this issue in the scientific circles.**

**Climate change is not fake, it really exists. It is not the product of any single group or individual possessing some special technology.**

## FALSE CLAIM

Climate change or weather control?

When extreme weather conditions occur, climate change is quickly identified as the cause.

What if these extreme weather conditions are a result of targeted weather control?

Live, the sky above Tirana.

Almost every day they scatter chemicals, viruses and allergens to tie us up with the pharmacies.

This is climate change... perfect weapon in the hands of the elites. Causes hurricanes, earthquakes, thunderstorms, but also droughts.

It is neither climate change, nor CO2 emissions in the atmosphere released by humans...

YOU JUST NEED TO STOP PLANES SPRAYING EVERY DAY MILLIONS OF TONS OF HEAVY METALS (ALUMINUM, BARIUM, STRONTIUM, NICKEL, IRON, LEAD, CADMIUM...) IN THE ATMOSPHERE AND ALL OF THIS MADNESS WILL STOP, THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT IS CAUSED BY THAT ABNORMAL SPRAYING OF HEAVY METALS FROM THE PLANES !!!

## FACT

**Natural disasters are not new and the position of science is clear and straightforward, warning us that the frequency and increased number of extreme weather events are, in fact, a consequence of climate change.**

**According to the US Environmental Protection Agency and NASA, the white traces behind the flying aircraft are not chemical trails or chemtrails, but condensation trails. They mainly consist of water and are not detrimental to the people's health.**

**The weapon from the post is, in fact, part of the radar type SBX, key component of U.S. Missile Defense Agency's land-based intermediate-range defense program. It has nothing to do with the weather and cannot influence the climate.**

**The reason for the existence of the global warming is a human factor, mostly because of high CO2 emissions added to the atmosphere. The alleged spraying of "millions of tons of heavy metals from planes" does not happen, there is no evidence of such actions ever being implemented and therefore have nothing to do with the greenhouse effect whatsoever.**