February 2025

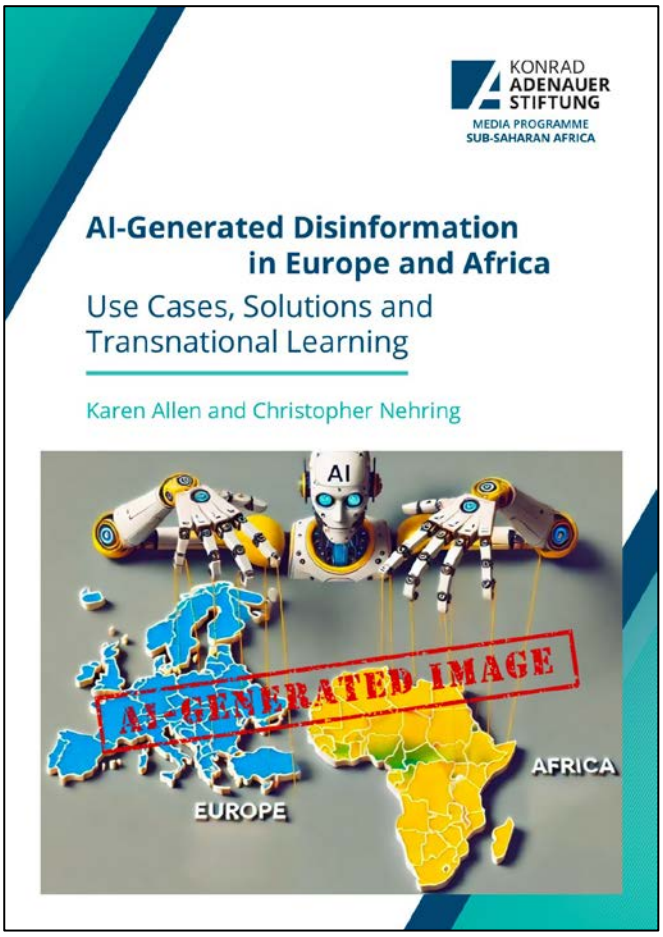
Press Release

AI-Generated Disinformation in Europe and Africa

How elections are influenced and what we can do about it

New Study of the KAS Media Programme Sub-Saharan Africa

Disinformation is the digital plague of our time. And with the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the creation and dissemination of disinformation, a completely new dimension has been reached. The World Economic Forum's *Global Risk Report* has therefore declared AI-generated disinformation the number 1 global risk. Manipulated video, audio and text files are used as weapons to distort reality, exacerbate conflict and deceive people - for example, in tampering with elections. This poses a great risk that democratic principles will be undermined.



The new study by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's Media Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa, based in Johannesburg, identifies the existing forms of AI-generated disinformation. It names actors and targets using concrete examples. It also presents measures against disinformation and lists concrete recommendations for countermeasures.

For the first time, the study compares the current challenges related to AI-generated disinformation in Europe and Africa. It was produced by two proven experts on this topic: Karen Allen from South Africa, and Dr Christopher Nehring from Germany. The two experts worked together for several weeks in Johannesburg last year.

Authors of the Study:

Karen Allen

Karen Allen is a former BBC correspondent with over 25 years of experience covering Africa and the Middle East. She now advises a number of organizations on emerging threats, including cyber threats and information operations. For the Institute for Security Studies, Johannesburg, she has conducted studies on the impact of disinformation and interference on elections in Kenya and South Africa. Karen Allen holds a Master's degree in International Relations and Contemporary Warfare from King's College London, and is a visiting scholar in the Department of War Studies. She has lived on the African continent for the past 20 years.

Dr Christopher Nehring

Dr Christopher Nehring is a researcher, analyst and journalist and currently the director of intelligence at the Cyberintelligence Institute in Frankfurt, Germany. He is an expert on disinformation and has been a visiting lecturer on disinformation, intelligence and media at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's Media Programme South East Europe and at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication at Sofia University. He worked as a senior analyst at the Institute for Global Analysis in Sofia and has been working as a journalist and editor for various media outlets (e.g. Deutsche Welle, Spiegel, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Tagesspiegel, etc.) since 2017.

Quotes about the study:

Hendrik Sittig, Director, KAS Media Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa

"It is frightening how easy it is today to create photos, videos and audio files that cannot be recognized as fakes. We urgently need more enlightenment, media literacy and countermeasures. With our study, we are looking at both Africa and Europe for the first time. We are also considering possible joint initiatives and partnerships between our two continents. Let us learn from each other!"

Karen Allen:

"AI Technology comes with much promise and for Africa the prospect of accelerated development. But Artificial Intelligence poses a threat to democratic principles, so checks and balances are urgently needed to ensure the benefits outweigh the harms. I'm afraid that untamed technology could turn Africa into the scene of a global arms race in AI-driven disinformation."

Dr Christopher Nehring:

"Our comparison of AI disinformation in Europe and Africa shows that AI is the new 'weapon of mass deception.' Artificial Intelligence is propelling disinformation into a new era – faster, cheaper, more widespread, and more convincing than ever before. Our study reveals that all forms of AI manipulation are already in use across Europe and Africa. Neither states, authorities, online platforms, nor tech companies are currently implementing effective countermeasures. What we've seen so far is just the tip of the iceberg - and a devilish promise for the future."

Presentations of the study:

Berlin
Monday, February 17, 2025 / 4 pm
Akademie der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Tiergartenstraße 35, Raum 6/7

Brussels
Thursday, February 20th / 9:30 am
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Multinational Development Dialogue, 11 Avenue de l'Yser

The authors are available for interviews.
Karen Allen – English.
Dr Christopher Nehring – German and English.

Download the study:

The study will be available for download on our website from February 17th:
https://www.kas.de/en/web/medien-afrika/einzeltitel/detail/-/content/new-study-ai-generated-disinformation-in-europe-and-africa

If you would like to view the study earlier, please send us an email:
cailan.ferreira-mokoka@kas.de

KAS Media Programme Sub-Saharan Africa

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation's Media Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa has been based in Johannesburg, South Africa, since 2002. The focus is on the entire Sub-Saharan region. The program works with almost 20 KAS offices across the continent. The Media Programm's projects are based on three goals: training and continuing education for journalists, improving the framework conditions for journalistic work, and professionalizing political communication. To this end, the program organizes conferences, seminars and workshops together with national and regional partner organizations and produces studies and analysis. The exchange of ideas and experiences as well as networking between actors are important.

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