



CASE

INFORM.ZP.UA

“**Fighting Disinformation:
Fact-Checking as a Front in the
War in Ukraine**”

STUDY

IN SHORT

Inform.zp.ua implemented Zaporizhzhya: Exposing The Lie, its first coordinated fact-checking series against Russian propaganda in the Zaporizhzhya region. Over two months, the project produced eight fact-checking articles, social media explainers, and videos, reaching more than 113,000 users. The initiative created a repeatable model for combating disinformation in a frontline context and established a recognizable visual brand for trustworthy content.

ABOUT THE NEWS OUTLET

Inform.zp.ua is an independent local news outlet based in Zaporizhzhya, Ukraine. Operating under wartime conditions, the newsroom covers regional and national issues, while also working to protect its community from disinformation. The project Zaporizhzhya: Exposing The Lie was its first structured fact-checking initiative.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

To counter the spread of Russian disinformation in the Zaporizhzhya region by building a structured, repeatable fact-checking model. The project aimed to identify the most harmful false narratives, deliver clear and accessible debunking content, and strengthen public trust in verified local journalism.



IMPLEMENTED SOLUTIONS

Inform.zp.ua launched a branded fact-checking series combining articles, visual explainers, and short videos. The team monitored propaganda channels, prioritized audience-relevant narratives, and used consistent templates and visuals. Cross-functional collaboration enabled rapid production, while social media distribution maximized reach.

Transitions

WHY THIS PROJECT?

The team recognized that Russian propaganda is a persistent threat in Zaporizhzhya and needed a systematic way to counter it. By monitoring Telegram, social media, and local feedback, they identified the most harmful disinformation and designed a project to expose it. The goal was to develop a consistent, branded fact-checking workflow that could serve as both a rapid-response tool and a long-term editorial strategy.

HOW DID APPLYING DESIGN THINKING PRINCIPLES HELP?

While the project did not formally use the full design-thinking methodology, several of its principles were applied. During the setup phase, user-centered thinking guided the identification of disinformation themes based on audience feedback. Prototyping was used to design templates and visuals, with early drafts tested internally before publishing. Collaborative work among journalists, editors, a graphic designer, and a videographer allowed for quick adjustments and ensured clarity and consistency. These practices improved both internal coordination and external audience engagement.

DID INFORM.ZP.UA'S APPROACH CHANGE ENGAGEMENT WITH ITS AUDIENCE IN ANY WAY?

Yes. The visual-first approach led to strong engagement, especially on social media. Users actively commented on fact-checking posts, with responses such as: "Thanks for clearing this up I was unsure if it was real" and "Thank you for your work." Engagement was particularly high when debunking emotionally manipulative narratives, confirming that the project addressed real audience concerns. Polls and comment prompts helped the team better understand what topics resonated most with readers.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID INFORM.ZP.UA ENCOUNTER AND HOW DID IT ADDRESS THEM?

The biggest challenge was the ongoing war. Shelling, air-raid alerts, and blackouts disrupted work schedules and limited in-person collaboration. The team adapted by shifting to remote coordination and flexible deadlines. Another challenge was targeted bot activity on social media, which required increased moderation efforts. Platform algorithms also limited the reach of political content, even when factual, prompting the team to experiment with clearer headlines, shorter captions, and stronger visuals.

HOW WAS INFORM.ZP.UA'S PROJECT RECEIVED BY ITS AUDIENCE?

The project reached a total of 113,802 users across Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and the website. Visual explainers and short videos consistently outperformed text-only formats. Audience comments and reactions showed appreciation for the clarity of the content and reinforced trust in Inform.zp.ua as a reliable source of verified information during wartime.

The fact-checking series strengthened Inform.zp.ua's credibility, particularly among younger audiences on Instagram and Telegram. The newsroom also attracted increased interest from NGOs and local educators, who requested permission to use the content in media-literacy training sessions. This expanded the project's impact beyond journalism into education and civic engagement.

WHAT INSIGHTS OR LESSONS DID INFORM.ZP.UA GAIN FROM THIS PROJECT?

The team learned that speed and clarity are essential in countering disinformation. Testing formats early and adjusting quickly proved more effective than aiming for perfection. Visual storytelling, emotional literacy, and real-time feedback loops played a key role in increasing engagement. The project reinforced their conviction that fact checking must be a continuous editorial priority in a high-risk information environment.

WHAT DOES INFORM.ZP.UA PLAN ON DOING NEXT?

Inform.zp.ua plans to expand the initiative into a permanent fact-checking section on its website. The team has already secured a new grant to support the continuation of this work, ensuring the project's sustainability. They also plan to seek additional funding in 2026 to further develop and scale the initiative.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD INFORM.ZP.UA GIVE TO OTHER JOURNALISTS OR ORGANISATIONS CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PATH?

Start small, move fast, and do not aim for perfection. Audiences value clarity and timeliness over polished production. Prioritizing emotional literacy is key, as manipulative content spreads because it feels true, not because it is factual. Clear, visual debunking helps counter this effectively.