

AI Forensics Annual Report

2024

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Introduction

Welcome from the Director

As we reflect on this pivotal year for AI Forensics, we have much to celebrate. Our data-driven investigations have had a [tangible impact on platform behavior and regulation enforcement](#).

Our unique evidence collection pipeline and methodologies have established us as a leading expert on algorithmic auditing and platform accountability. We have [reached a new stage of organizational maturity](#), and are positioned to continue scaling our impact.

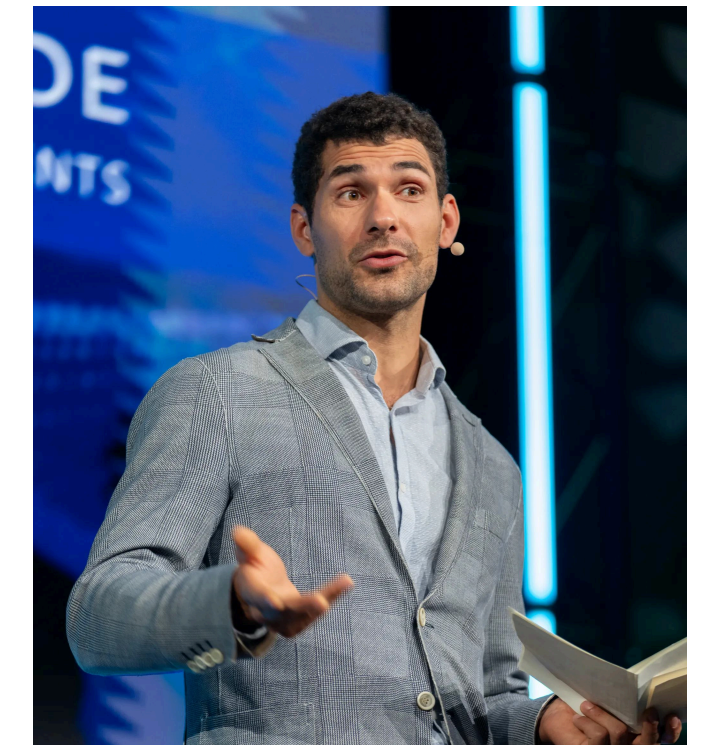
Yet, our accomplishments unfold against a backdrop of profound and concerning transformations in the global techno-political landscape. Technology companies, previously motivated primarily by profit, are now increasingly colluding with state actors to serve political interests.

Those same companies promote a rapid and unchecked deployment of new AI systems, with far-reaching societal repercussions.

These dynamics exacerbate the [pressing need for digital sovereignty in Europe and other parts of the world, particularly over critical information infrastructure](#). This is just part of a broader tsunami of developments that jeopardize fundamental rights and democratic processes globally, which can sometimes feel paralyzing. Where should we focus our attention and efforts?

The role we must play at AI Forensics is clear, and more timely with every day. [We must hold the growing power of tech platforms to account](#), because it is a prerequisite to address these critical challenges. Our unique capabilities in this area empower us to respond effectively.

The changing landscape has made us [more committed than ever to our mission](#). We will continue to expose algorithmic harms, and to provide technical expertise and evidence to institutions and organizations working towards a technological future that uphold the rights and interests of society at large.



Marc Faddoul
[Co-Founder](#)
[& Director of](#)
[AI Forensics](#)

About Us

Who We Are & What We Do

AI Forensics is a European non-profit which audits influential and opaque algorithms.

It was established to address a critical gap in civil society: [providing technical expertise and evidence gathering capabilities for algorithmic auditing](#). In just four years, we emerged as the leading European actor.

We hold major technology platforms accountable by [conducting independent, high-impact investigations](#) into the AI and algorithmic systems which shape how information flows.

We develop unique evidence collection tools and methodologies to expose digital rights violations with data-driven reports, and inform regulators and policymakers with our technical insights.



Who We Are & What We Do

Develop Tools for Algorithmic Auditing

Collect Evidence

Our audits are always data-driven, but the data we need is typically not made available by the platforms. Our tools allow us to mimic user behaviors, and collect behavioral data on the algorithm, using methods such as sock-puppeting, scraping or user data donation. We also leverage the researcher data access mechanisms which the DSA mandates from the platforms.

Conduct Investigations

Analyse & Interpret

Our research and data analysis methodologies are informed by the socio-technical expertise of our transdisciplinary team (computer & data science, social psychology, tech policy & ethics, media studies...) and with partners with complementary domain expertise.

Expose Violations & Inform Regulation

Testify

Our investigations often receive high-profile press coverage, which raise public pressure and awareness. We also provide insights and actionable recommendations to inform and support policymakers, regulation enforcement, and advocacy efforts. We regularly provide expertise through congressional testimonies, academic conferences, and other public forums.

They speak for us

Elise Tillet

Lead Campaign & Media

Luminate

”

AI Forensics is a cornerstone of the platform accountability movement. Through their unique technical skills, they conduct investigations that shine a light on the harms created by Big Tech and their social media platforms. [Their work has been instrumental in leading to greater accountability of Big Tech platforms.](#) Additionally, their collaborative approach supports key stakeholders, including EU regulators, civil society organisations, and leading media outlets, in efforts to end Big Tech’s impunity.

”

They speak for us

Willem Lenders

Program Manager



”

What we appreciate about AI Forensics is their strong commitment to collaboration with other stakeholders. [Holding major tech companies to account when their algorithms cause harm is an uphill battle.](#) It is important that government institutions, campaigners, advocates, journalists, researchers and litigators work together to make sure that we stand a chance.

AI Forensics is very effective, not only in the technical research that is at the core of their work but also in ensuring that their findings inform legislation, enforcement or public awareness raising. [As a foundation that funds both tech accountability work and public interest journalism, it has been the cherry on top that AI Forensics’ research has informed some incredible journalism](#) – among which by The Washington Post, Le Monde and The Guardian.

”

Our achievements

Featured Reports and Impact



Exposing Meta's Failure to Moderate Political Ads and its Exploitation by a Large pro-Russian Information Operation

This AI Forensics investigation revealed that 60% of reviewed ads did not comply with Meta's political advertising rules, allowing a pro-Russian influence operation to target EU citizens during critical parliamentary election periods. One propaganda campaign alone reached over 38 million users in France and Germany, often evading detection. The operation's use of geopolitical events to undermine democratic integrity highlights the urgent need for stronger enforcement of the Digital Services Act.

Featured Reports and Impact



Exposing Meta’s Failure to Moderate Political Ads and its Exploitation by a Large pro-Russian Information Operation

Impact:

Our report findings was a catalyst for [a formal investigation](#) by the European Commission into Meta for potential violations of the Digital Services Act. A [follow-up report](#) with CheckFirst outlined the [escalation of propaganda campaigns](#) targeting Italy and Poland in the lead-up to the EU elections. This investigation resulted in [an official partnership with the European Commission](#) to gather evidence for ongoing proceedings.

This work was also widely covered in major media, including the [New York Times](#) and [Forbes](#).

Featured Reports and Impact

Pay-to-Play: Meta's Community (Double) Standards on Pornographic Ads

Our [report](#) exposes a [double standard in Meta's content moderation](#) practices. Over [3,000 pornographic adverts](#) with explicit imagery were distributed by Meta's advertising system last year. Yet similar content posted by users is detected Meta's algorithms and swiftly removed. These ads promoted dubious sexual enhancement products and hook-up sites, often leveraging [AI-generated media](#), including deepfake content of French actor Vincent Cassel. In total, they generated [over 8 million impressions](#) across the EU, primarily targeting men aged 44 and older.

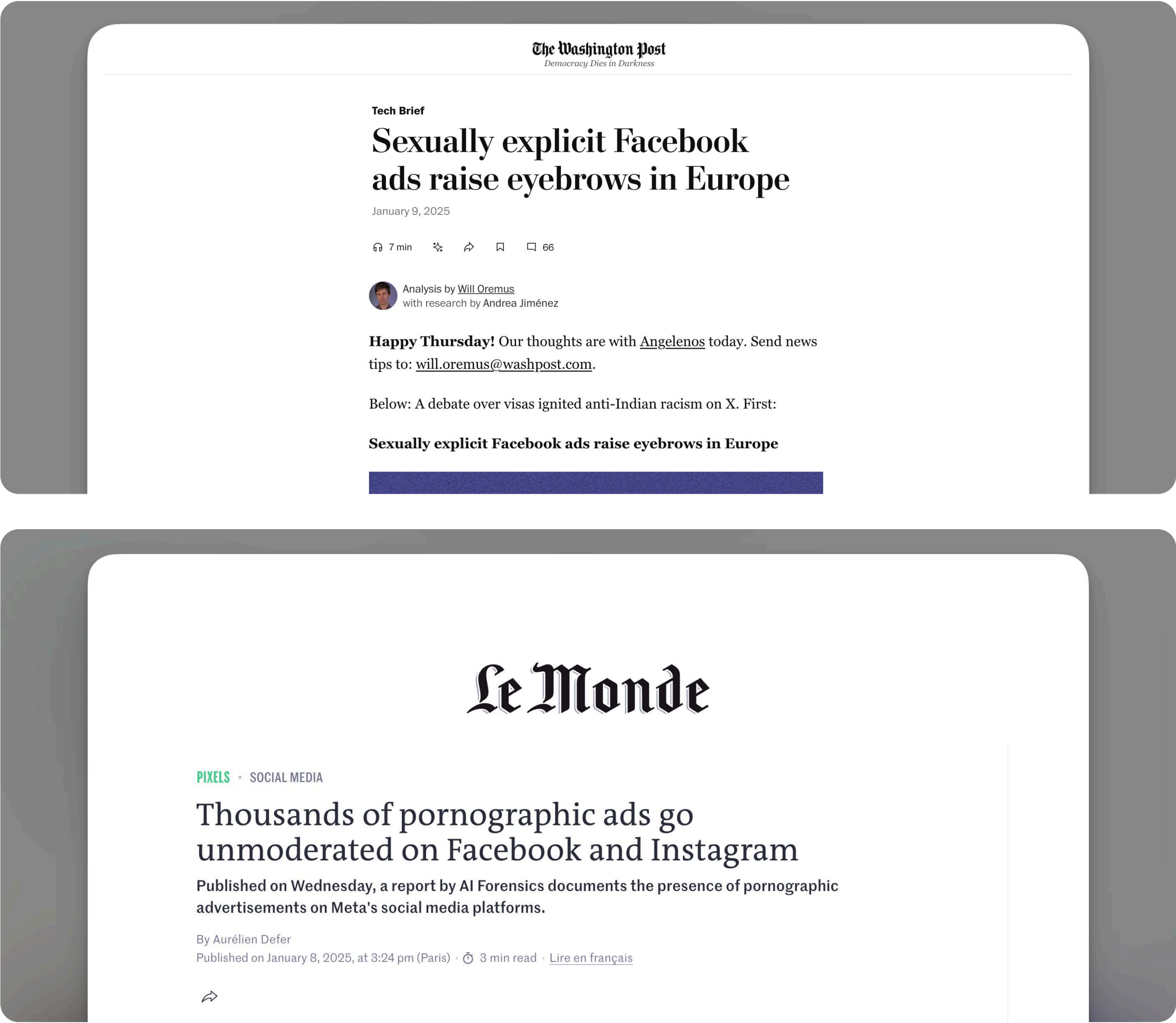


Featured Reports and Impact

Pay-to-Play: Meta’s Community (Double) Standards on Pornographic Ads

Impact:

Our findings sparked a backlash, particularly among users frustrated by Meta’s excessive moderation of legitimate content. The report also drew regulatory scrutiny. Meta’s inconsistent content moderation undermines the credibility of its [Risk Assessment Reports](#), required under the DSA, in which they claim proactive reviews of adverts to uphold Advertising Standards. Following our investigation, [a U.S. Senator officially demanded](#) that Mark Zuckerberg provide explanations for Meta’s moderation of explicit adverts. For more on this investigation, see coverage in the [Washington Post](#) and [Le Monde](#).



Featured Reports and Impact



EU Parliamentary Election Monitoring

AI Forensics analyzed algorithm-driven content on YouTube, TikTok and Microsoft Copilot during the EU elections in a [collaborative effort](#) with civil society organizations, scholars, and media.

Our research identified [51 instances of unlabeled AI-generated imagery](#) used to amplify anti-EU and anti-immigrant narratives during the EU and French elections. Additionally, [a report with SNV](#) revealed misleading TikTok search suggestions that impacted election perceptions.

[In partnership with Nieuwsuur](#), we tested AI chatbot responses to political campaign prompts in the Netherlands. The follow-up report studied the effectiveness of safeguards, particularly the consistency of electoral moderation triggers based on (i) the chatbot used (ii) the language of the prompt (iii) the electoral context and (iv) the interface.

Featured Reports and Impact

POLITICO

NEWS > TECHNOLOGY

French far-right parties target voters with AI ahead of vote

The country's National Rally and Reconquest political parties have used the tech to promote divisive messages about migration and the EU.



BBC

AI: Google restricts Gemini chatbot election answers

13 March 2024

Share Save

Peter Hoskins
Business reporter



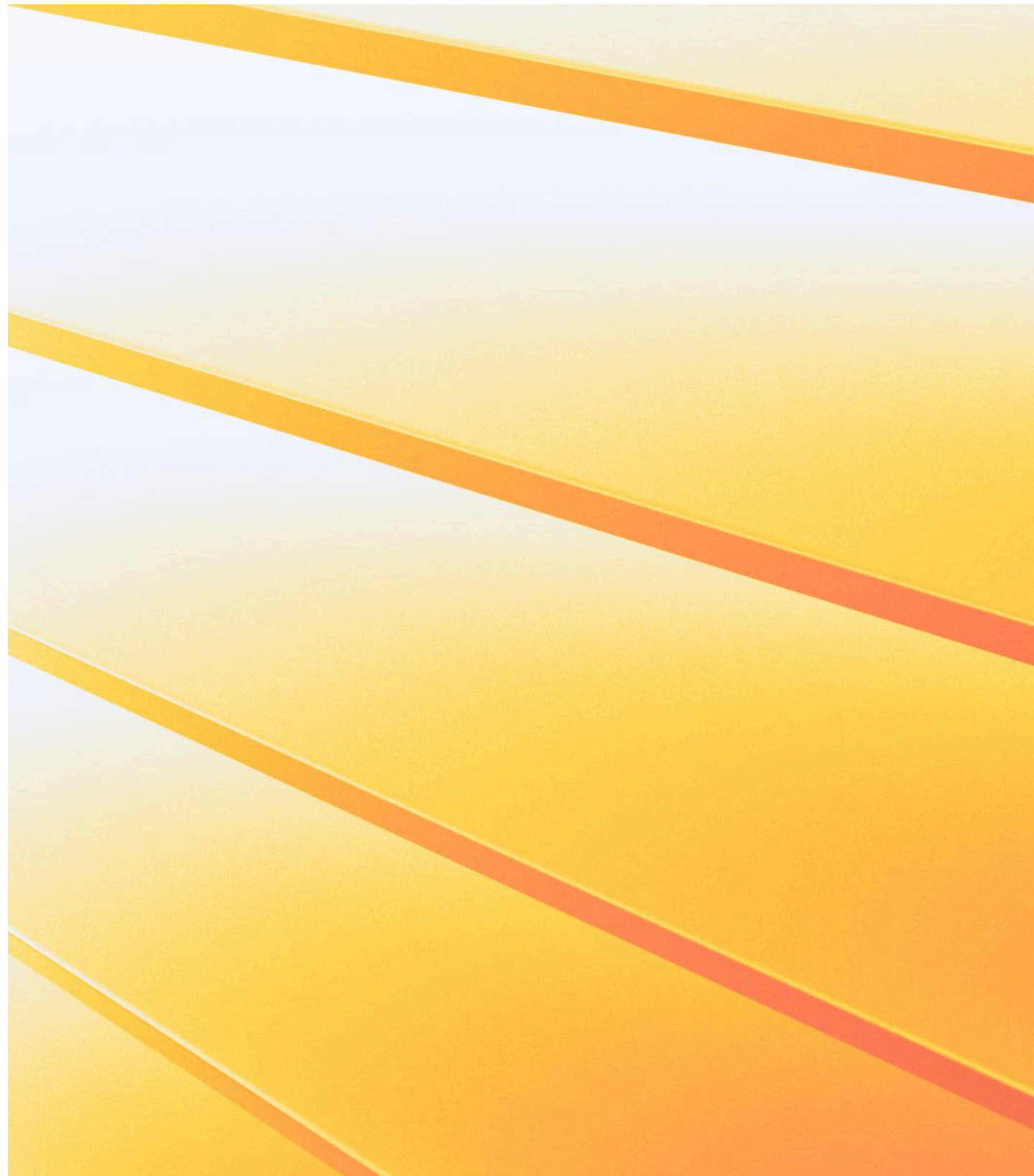
EU Parliamentary Election Monitoring

Impact:

These findings underscore the [urgent need for stronger AI and content moderation policies](#) to protect electoral integrity in France, Germany and the Netherlands. Our work informed the ongoing negotiations for [EU-wide regulations on generative AI and algorithm-driven content](#) to safeguard democracy. Our scrutiny prompted the implementation of [new safety measures](#), redirecting users to official sources for election-related queries.

For further insights, explore media coverage by [Politico](#) and [BBC](#).

2024 Highlights



Strengthening Our Evidence Collection Infrastructure

In 2024, we made significant improvements to our evidence collection infrastructure, [enhancing its robustness and scope of capabilities](#) to meet the demands of our investigations. We invested in additional hardware to build a more resilient system, improving availability and reducing downtime during critical operations. At the same time, [we took steps to reduce our dependency on third-party providers](#), to increase our operational flexibility and independence.

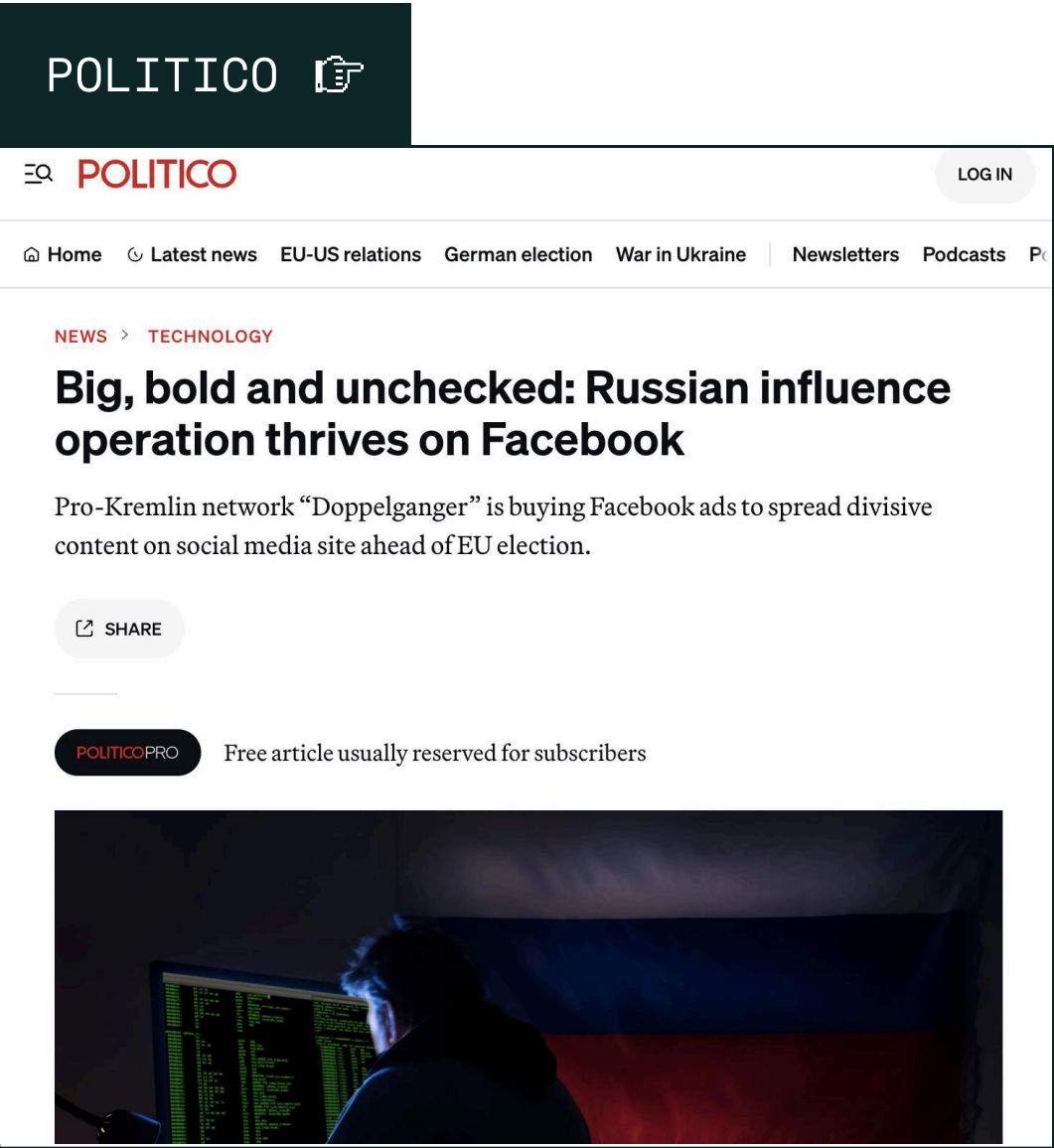
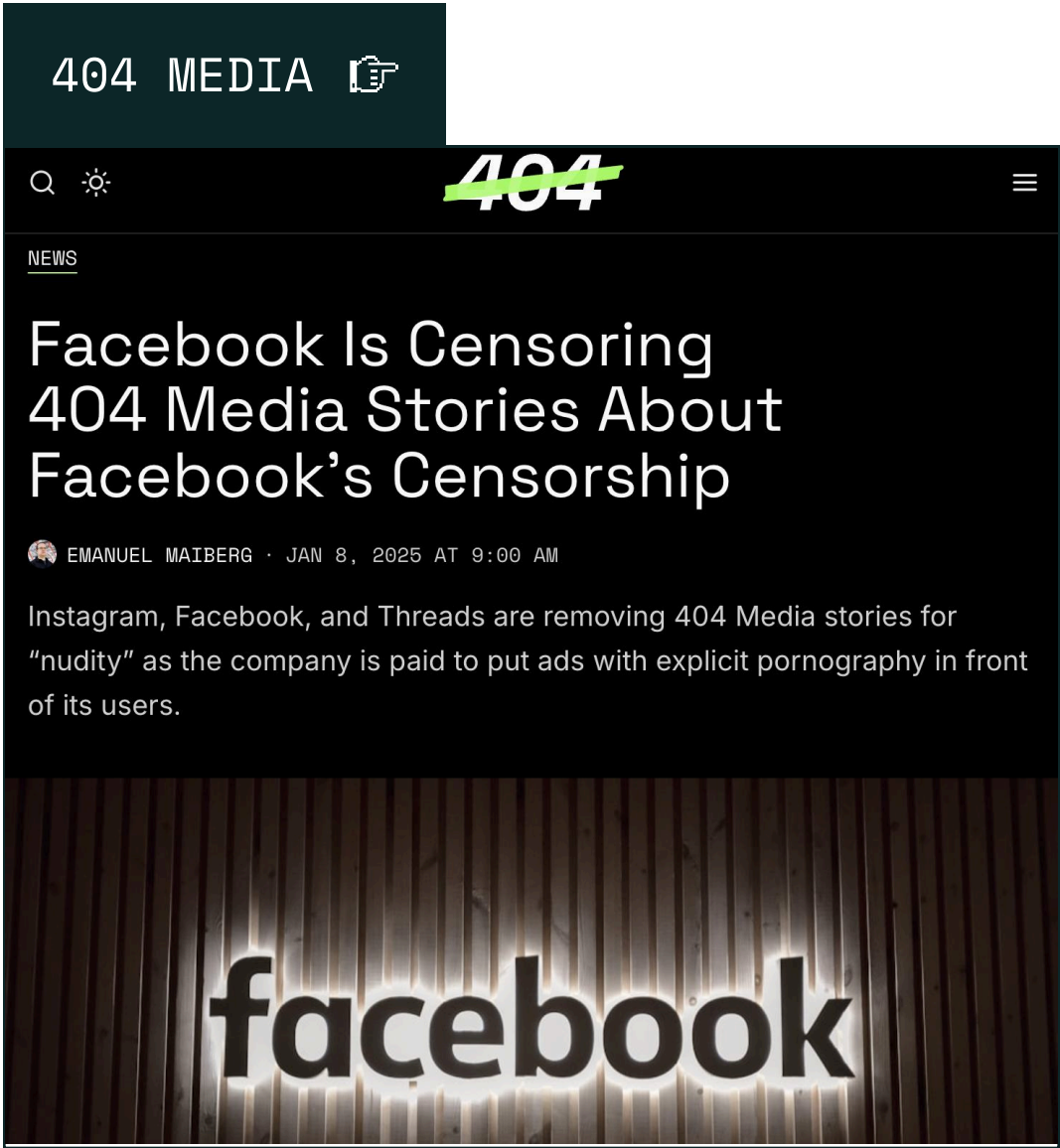
To speed up and optimize data collection processes, we began implementing [Continuous Deployment pipelines](#), enabling our developers to make updates more efficiently. Our scraping tools were also updated [to accommodate the ever-evolving user interfaces](#) of online platforms, ensuring continued effectiveness in spite of changes. [A reproducible experimentation framework was also introduced](#) - enabling better control on our data collection - [as well a multi-annotator system to streamline annotation processes](#).

We also started sharing more of our code with [the audit community](#), by developing and releasing a large-scale prompt and query generator [as open-source software](#). These developments underscore our commitment to building a resilient, modular, and community-oriented infrastructure capable of solving unaddressed data collection challenges for platform accountability.

2024 Highlights

Highlighted in the Press: Media Attention on Our Reports

Our work has garnered significant media attention, with over [40 articles](#) published across major international publications. We achieved a global reach, featuring in top-tier media across eight languages and more than ten countries, including the [New York Times](#), [Washington Post](#), [The Guardian](#), [Le Monde](#), [Time](#), [Bloomberg](#), [BBC](#), [Reuters](#), [Forbes](#), [Politico](#), [Wired](#), and [AP News](#). Our reports received diverse coverage in general news, tech, policy, and investigative journalism outlets.



2024 Highlights

Engaging in Key Policy and Public Discussions

Our team actively [participated in prestigious public forums](#), regularly attending policy meetings with European Commission to present our work and findings. Furthermore, our growing recognition within the ecosystem is reflected in our frequent invitations to prominent events, where we engage in keynote speeches and panel discussions.

Raziye Buse Çetin discussed the challenges of adversarial auditing and its role in algorithmic accountability as a panelist at [CPDP.ai](#), while our director, Marc Faddoul, took part in [Brussels’ first Nobel Prize Dialogue](#), where Nobel laureates, thought leaders, and scientists explored ways to strengthen democracy and examined the intersection of democracy, decision-making, and science in a pivotal 2024 election year.



Raziye Buse Çetin at the 2024 Annual Computers, Privacy, and Data Protection Conference.



Marc Faddoul at the 2024 Nobel Prize Dialogue: "Fact & Fiction – The Future of Democracy."

2024 Highlights

Key Milestones with the European Commission

We achieved significant milestones with the European Commission by successfully securing two key tenders under the Digital Services Act:

- **Lot 1** (led by Visionary Analytics): Providing technical assistance for market intelligence, evidence gathering, and compliance monitoring. This includes tracking technological developments, economic and market trends, and social media data to identify systemic risks, digital threats, and potentially dangerous challenges **on Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) and Very Large Online Search Engines (VLOSEs)**.
- **Lot 2** (led by Institute for Strategic Dialogue): Addressing prominent and recurring risks within Member States, with a focus on critical areas such as **pornographic platforms, threats to civic discourse, electoral processes, public security, gender-based violence, illegal content, mental well-being, and the protection of minors**.



Marc Faddoul at "Protecting the 2024 Elections: From Alarm to Action"—How the DSA can safeguard democracy by meaningfully addressing the virality of disinformation and hate speech.

A Year of Growth: Strengthening Our Team & Operations

In 2024 our team expanded from 12 to 16 members. To support us with the challenges that come with growth, we welcomed Ibis Lilley as our Head of Operations. With two decades of experience, Ibis has been instrumental in helping to scale our impact, strengthen organizational resilience, and enhance team well-being.

“ I have been so impressed with the caliber of people I get to work with. So many in our team are at the forefront of their field helping us to [set the standards in algorithmic auditing](#). Everyone at the organization shares their expertise in the most accessible and collaborative way. The [deep commitment to transparency, accountability and decentralisation](#) that drives our platform investigations also permeate all areas of the organization. So it was a particular joy to work on the hiring processes in a way that not only protects but enriches the core culture of the organization.



Ibis Lilley
Head of Operations
AI Forensics

[Being impactful is one of the values of AI Forensics](#) and it is a major part of what drew me to the organization. So I view my role as being of service to the whole team. Improvements of internal operations make sure we continue to multiply our impact both at an organizational level and also at a personal, professional level. My work is multifaceted and ranges from looking at [our project tracking mechanisms, our pay policy and governance structures](#) to facilitating discussions on our core values and [nurturing our supportive work environment](#).

Upcoming projects include setting up an Advisory Board, internal training and stronger feedback mechanisms [to cultivate our organizational resilience](#). The digital rights ecosystem is facing challenging times. However I look to the future with boundless optimism as our work has never been more critical and [the outstanding AI Forensics team is better equipped](#) than ever to face what the future holds.

Fundraising Overview

In 2024, we made significant strides in strengthening our financial position, securing new funding sources, and expanding our partnerships. Our budget grew by nearly 50% compared to the previous year, reflecting this progress. We received additional support from funders such as the Omidyar Network, as well as a two-year core funding commitment from Civitates starting in 2025.

A major milestone in our financial growth was our first official tender collaboration with the European Commission, securing two lots under the Digital Services Act (DSA) enforcement framework. These contracts strengthen our financial outlook and position us as a key contributor to the Commission’s oversight of Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) and Very Large Search Engines (VLOSEs).

These developments not only diversify our revenue streams but also provide financial stability over the next three years. Despite these positive strides, securing sustainable, diversified funding remains a key priority. We are actively engaging with potential funders and submitting project applications to address remaining budget gaps in the coming years.

We want to express our heartfelt gratitude to our funders for their unwavering support. Your generosity has been instrumental in driving our mission forward and making a tangible difference. Thank you for partnering with us to create positive change.



Thank you!

Credits:

Katsiaryna Viadziorchyk
Report writing

Ibis Lilley
Editing

Denis Constant / Ittai Studio :
Graphic & Brand Design
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<https://www.instagram.com/ittai.sys/>

All other content (c) AI Forensics 2025
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Social Media : [LinkedIn](#) | [Bluesky](#)

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our donors, partners, and peer organizations for their goodwill and collaboration. Your contributions—whether through funding, joint projects, shared expertise, or resources—have been instrumental in amplifying our impact this year. Together, we have tackled complex challenges, strengthened our mission, and achieved more than we could have alone. Your trust and commitment inspire us, and we look forward to continuing our work together to drive meaningful change in the years ahead.

Thank you!

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