

***Bringing local disinformation
into the discussion:
a contribution from Portugal***

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Ongoing debate...

- MediaTrust.Lab – Local Media Lab for Civic Trust and Literacy
- Jerónimo, P. & Esparza, M.S. (2022). **Disinformation at a Local Level: An Emerging Discussion**, *Publications*, 10(2):15, 1-14
- Jerónimo, P., Ramos, G. & Torre, L. (2022 – in press). **“News Deserts Europe 2022: Portugal Report”**. Covilhã: MediaTrust.Lab / LabCom
- New project? (EU “news deserts” agenda)



What is Local Disinformation?

An ecosystem for the production, propagation and consumption of false, inaccurate or misleading information with or without the intention of achieving profit or seeking to cause public harm and related to a more geographically delimited territory and/or community

MediaTrust.Lab, 2022 (following the European Commission proposal, 2017)



...and “news deserts”?

“A community, either rural or urban, with limited access to the sort of credible and comprehensive news and information that feeds democracy at the grassroots level”

Abernathy, P. (2018). The expanding news desert (...)



Relevance of the local context

- The decline of local media leaves communities in a state of serious vulnerability (“news deserts” grows)
- Local press articulates community identity and preserves local memories
- Local media are highly trusted brands
- Less resources from national media = Less local news
- Local media = Less journalists = Less capacity to manage (des)information



Local media in Portugal

- Play an impt role in the Portuguese news diet (DNR 2022)
- Local press is more widely read than the national one (except for Lisbon and Porto)
- The pandemic caused the closure of some media and the reinvention of others (from print to “only online”)
- ...also helped to “speed up” the digital transition of some harder-to-move media



ND-EU 2022: Portugal Report

Proposed categories:

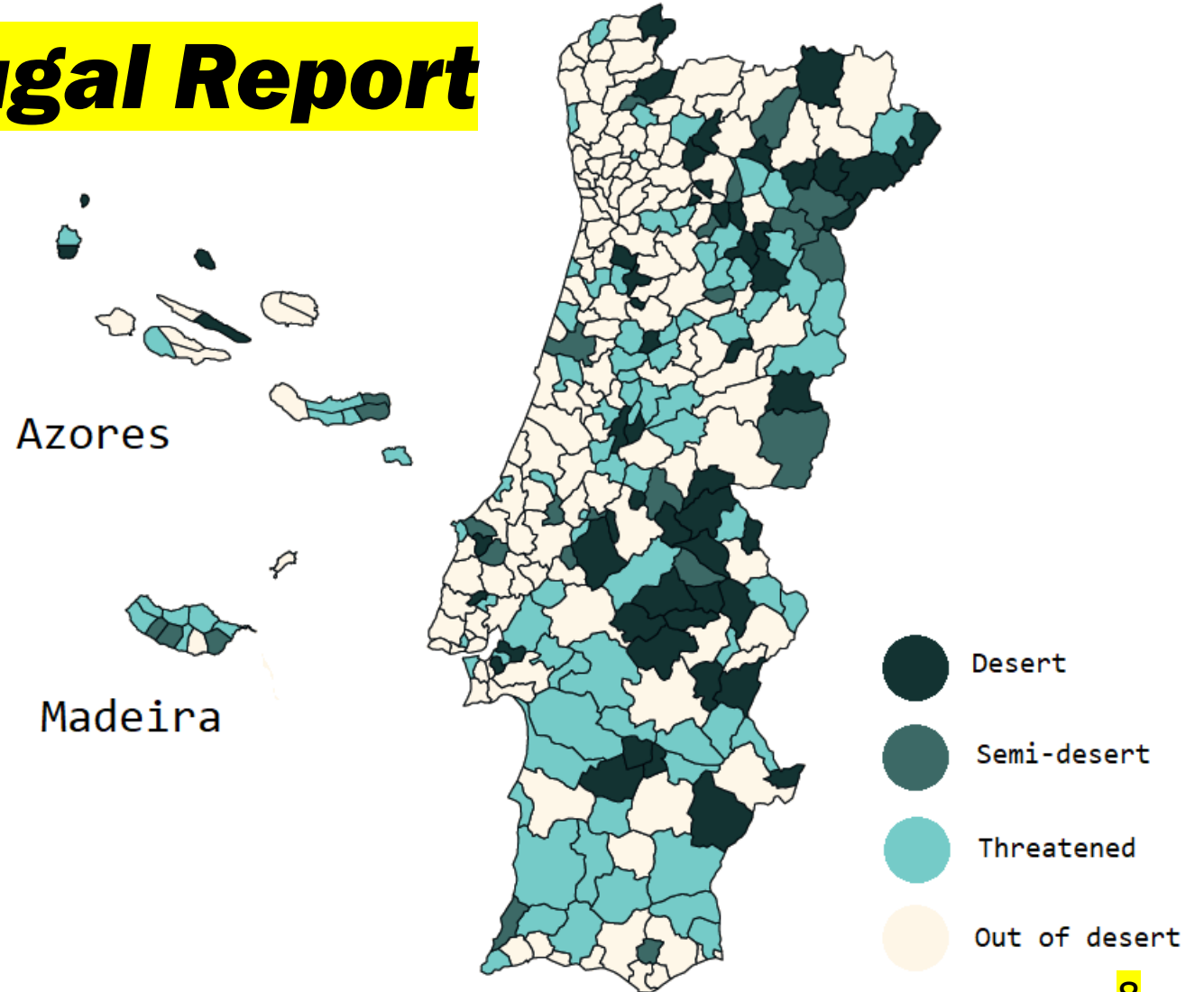
- **News desert:** municipality without local news
- **Semi-desert:** municipality with less frequent or unsatisfactory news coverage
- **Threatened:** municipality with only one media producing local news
- **Out of the desert:** municipality with two or more media producing local news



ND-EU 2022: Portugal Report

53.9% of the Portuguese municipalities already are or are on the verge of becoming news deserts.

From the existing 308, 166 are deserts or semi-deserts or threatened municipalities which is a **red flag** situation regarding news coverage



What's next?

Research on local disinformation is still scarce

More “news deserts” to reveal (other countries in the EU)

European Commission concerned (disinfo. and “news deserts”)

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This leads us to **new research and funding opportunities** to support the definition of **(new) public policies**



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