te yit .org

WHAT DO WE
DOUBT
ON THE WEB?

contents

from the editor

The motive that drove us to build teyit.org was the spreading of doubt and fear in times of crisis and the insufficiency of sources to meet the people's need for reliable information.

On 26 October 2016, we began our publishing life and published an article titled "teyit.org in the Age of Pinocchio", where we emphasized the significance of fighting against misinformation in a time when the social media have gained importance as means of communication.

The motive that drove us to build teyit.org was the spreading of doubt and fear in times of crises and the insufficiency of sources to meet people's need for reliable information.

Starting from this point of view, we have strived hard from the very first day to make teyit.org become a reference point which the users could search for the matters they doubt. We asked the users to send us any doubtful news they have encountered on the web.

This report was prepared based on the contents of 7,628 messages, which the followers of teyit.org sent us regarding the matters the truth of which they doubted, which they considered to be inaccurate or the truth of which they were curious about. While it may not be possible at this point to say that teyit.org users are the exact reflection of the general web user profile, it could be said that the report includes basis insights about what kind of claims or contents the users doubt on the web and what media they use for delivering the contents they doubt.

Other main issues covered by this report are; the periods where these doubts increase, the driving events and changes and the perception of users about the authorities' reaction to doubt and fear.
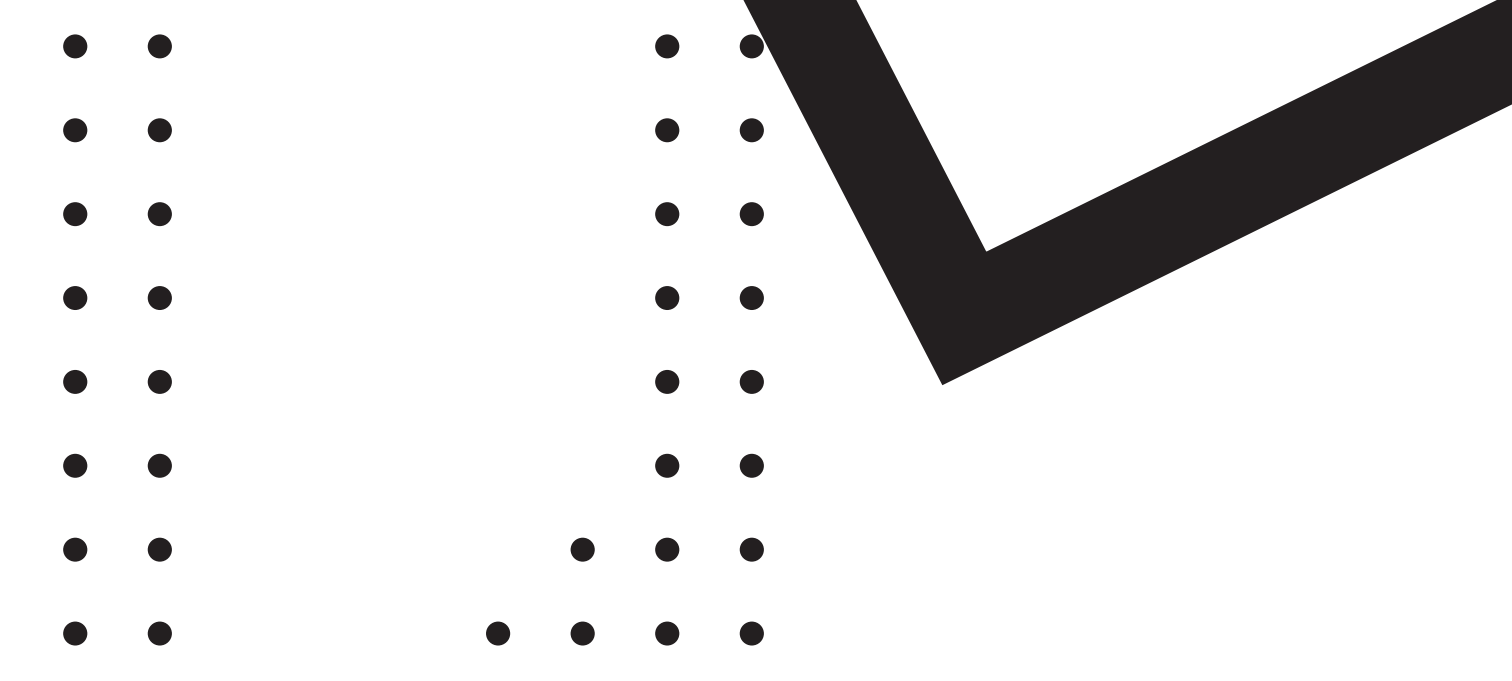
Further, the report provides answers to the question why a greater amount of misinformation and doubtful content circulate in times of crises and it keeps track of the effects of polarization and daily anxieties on the consumption of the news.

7,628 messages

We believe these insights prepared based on a year of experience gained by the editors of teyit.org will be useful for the relevant civil society organizations, public authorities, international organizations, media organizations and to all other institutions that have focused on the web as an indispensable part of their communication strategy.

Data about all the doubtful matters sent to teyit.org throughout a year have been organized based on certain criteria. In this section, you are going to find out the organization method of the data used in this report, which, based on the doubtful contents submitted to teyit.org, analyzes the contents the users doubt.

method ology

Prioritization of doubtful contents

The editors of teyit.org use a filter to enable prioritization of the doubtful news submitted to teyit.org for verification. This filter is composed of three basic components.

The first of these is urgency. This filter particularly comes into effect in times of crises where instant data about explosions, terror attacks, natural disasters, wars or fights have yet not been provided by reliable sources and it requires the prioritized analysis of doubtful news that has fatal risks.

The second filter is virality. When analyzing the doubtful contents, the editors of teyit.org assess in two levels whether the content is viral or not. If the content is spreading on the web just like a virus and reaching many people, the virality filter requires prioritization of such doubtful content.

In the second level which comes into play when the content is not viral, it is checked whether the content is an urban myth that comes to life now and then. If a doubtful content is shaking enough to set the agenda; if it comes as an accusation against a certain person or a group; or if it has been spread by a news website, politician, journalist or by gatekeepers who have the possibility to access different bodies, the importance filter requires the analysis of such doubtful content. Even if the doubtful content is not viral enough, the significance criterion can be put into effect considering the number of people the claimer may access.

Any doubtful content meeting at least one of these criteria is considered by the editors of teyit.org with priority. Other notifications are archived for later analysis. (Some of the archived contents were verified and published later.)

Principles and publishing policy of teyit.org

When analyzing the contents selected among the doubtful contents submitted to teyit.org or recognized by the editors, principles and publishing policy are assessed, as well.

The doubtful issues that are claimed to be spoken between two persons or within a group and the truth of which cannot be verified in the absence of another party in the relevant context during the time or conversation are not given consideration, even if the concerning people are accessible. Moreover, any claim must be based on objective and verifiable tangible data.

When verifying a claim, there must be at least two pieces of evidence to enable the conclusion of the doubtful data. The evidence must be public, reviewable and must be accessible by searching. Two or more pieces of evidence must be individually verified and they must verify each other.

Each prepared analysis is reviewed by at least two different editors. The review of these two other editors is carried out in two stages. In the first stage, the evidence, its accuracy and relevance are checked.

teyit.org is not a news website. It does not publish all accurate news. But there aresome exceptions in the publishing of doubtful contents that were published to be accurate.

In the second stage, the plainness of expression, the way of expression to minimize the backfire effect and the spelling are checked.

teyit.org is not a news website. It does not publish all accurate news. But there are some exceptions in the publishing of doubtful contents that were published to be accurate.

User-generated contents are assessed by teyit.org and if they are accurate, they are reviewed within the limits of virality. If there is still doubt about an outdated and accurate news and if it reappears in different periods, if there are rumors that the news is "inaccurate" although it is actually accurate, such content may be published. Further, even if news websites have discussed a claim, if different pieces of evidence can be presented and the points of news that are not considered by those news websites are discussed, the content that is concluded to be accurate, is published.

teyit.org does not act like a police or crime scene investigation team. Therefore; judicial cases, processes requiring the monitoring of security forces, evidence that can only be collected by the police, are outside the scope of analysis.

teyit.org is not a court. Cases requiring a judicial proceeding, that will remain doubtful until a decree is given, and doubtful news evidence of which can only be collected by the police, are not covered.

teyit.org is not an intelligence service. Evidence that can only be collected through intelligence activities and cases that cannot be resolved without the knowledge about the confidential activities of the states, are outside the scope of teyit.org.

Contents that could be of use to armed organizations are not published. teyit.org pays attention not to become a mean for the spreading of the propaganda of such organizations.

teyit.org acts with caution when there is a possibility that a hate speech turns into a hate crime. It does not publish anything that could grow such hate. It is sensitive when assessing the contents supporting discrimination on social media.

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It is sensitive when assessing the contents supporting discrimination on social media. Doubtful news breaching the confidentiality of the private life are not given consideration or published. "Nonpublic" social media posts, the names of the commenters on a Facebook page or profile photos are not published; privacy settings of the social media users are respected.

The increase of the tendency for inaccurate information to spread in times of crisis makes teyit.org work harder and more cautiously in order to prevent humanitarian crises and to protect innocent people from getting affected. "Factual" photos or videos appearing in times of crisis are not published, unless they are suspicious, in order not to increase the traumatic effect. Here, the principle is that teyit.org "is not a news website".

The expressions showing the verification status for doubtful news, like "Published", "Not-published", "Archived" or "No consideration", were determined within the framework of the above-stated methodology. Doubtful contents that were published after being verified by teyit.org according to the methodology, were marked as "Published". In the absence of sufficient evidence, or doubtful contents that were not published due to the publishing policy, were marked as "Not-published". Doubtful contents that failed to pass prioritization criteria, although fitting the methodology of teyit.org, were marked as "Archived". Finally, contents related to crimes, judicial proceedings or justice and contents including the propaganda of armed organizations, were excluded from analysis within the framework of the methodology of teyit.org.

> **Contents related with crimes, judicial proceedings or justice and contents including the propaganda of armed organizations, were excluded from analysis within the framework of the methodology of teyit.org.**

Determination of the topics of doubtful contents

Doubtful contents submitted to teyit.org for verification were categorized under 17 topics. These were; "Arts, Culture and Entertainment", "Crime, Law and Justice", "Disaster and Accident", "Economy, Business and Finance", "Education", "Environmental Issue", "Health", "Human Interest", "Labour", "Lifestyle and Leisure", "Politics", "Religion and Belief", "Science and Technology", "Social Issue", "Sport", "Unrest, Conflicts and War" and "Weather".

The standards specified for topics by International Press Telecommunications Council (IPTC) which is prepared by the prominent news agencies of the world were used in the determination of the topics.

Contents meeting the criteria for two or more topics at the same time were sequenced and the most relevant one was determined and used.

For example, when determining the topic for "the claim that Çaykur was sold to a Qatari company", either "Politics" or "Economics" was chosen as the topic title as it included both a state activity and an economic activity. In this case, the topic "Economics" was preferred as it included "the political reflection of an economic activity".

In another case, "the claim that Syrians could enroll in any university without any conditions" fit the topic "Education" as it referred to an arrangement concerning universities and also the topic tile "Politics", as it was related with Syrian refugees. As the claim basically included an arrangement concerning the Syrian refugees, it was analyzed under "Politics" topic.

Arts, Culture & Entertainment
Education
Economy, Business & Finance
Crime, Law & Justice
Human Interest
Politics
Science & Technology
Economy
Sport
Labour
Social Issue
Environmental Issue
Religion & Belief
Weather
Disaster and Accident
Health
Unrest, Conflicts and War

Determination of the types of doubtful contents

Doubtful contents submitted to teyit.org were categorized under 6 different types of contents as "Image", "Video", "Audio Record", "Social Media Content", "News" and "Other". When determining these types of contents, not the way the content was delivered to teyit.org, but the doubtful content itself was taken into consideration.

For example, if the person delivering the claim to teyit.org sent a Facebook sharing, the doubtful matter was considered and it was categorized as "Image" if the doubtful element was a photo or an image. If a text contained in such sharing was the doubtful element, it was categorized as "Social Media Content".

If the user who delivered the message did not refer to any content but only asked a question, it was categorized under "Other".

For example, "the claim of a photo showing that Gülen and Kılıçdaroğlu met in 1994" was categorized under "Image", as the doubtful element was a photo, although there was a social media content delivered.

On the other hand, "the claim that crocodiles ate a priest trying to walk on the surface of the water in Zimbabwe" was categorized under "News", as it was a news website-sourced element, although it was a social media content of the news site.

Determination of the place the published contents are produced and spread

Tools such as Google, Yandex, Crowdtangle and Tweetdeck were used for every doubtful content verified by and published on teyit.org and the place the content was produced and spread. This determination of the place the doubtful content was produced and spread was carried out using these tools and were indicated in teyit.org analyses.
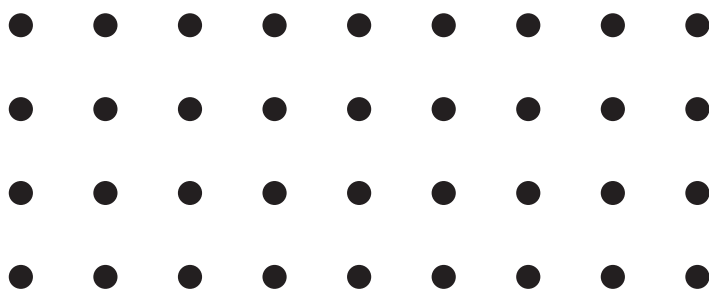
a general
overview
of the contents
the users
doubt
on the web

When teyit.org started its publishing life in October 2016, it also established contact lines which the users could use to report about the contents they doubted.

In order to detect any doubtful news and to prevent the spreading of misinformation circulating around on platforms where the editors of teyit.org would fail to reach, it was important to ask the users send teyit.org any doubtful content they encountered on the web.

Number of followers
185,710

Number of followers
34,697

website

75,347,568
Pageviews

10,832,963
Pageviews

6,002,643
Pageviews
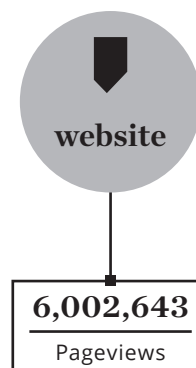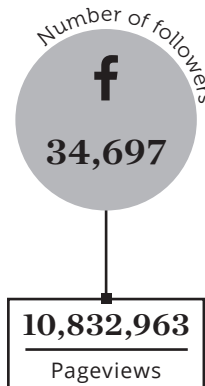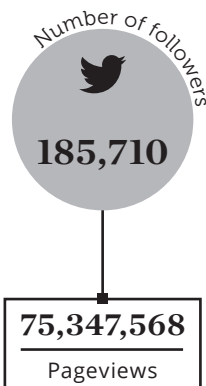
Between 26 October 2016 – 1 October 2017, a total of 7,628 messages were sent to teyit.org from all social media platforms. These messages included 3,820 individual doubtful contents.

The share of doubtful contents in the total number of messages sent

7,628
Total number of messages sent

3,820
Total number of the reported doubtful contents
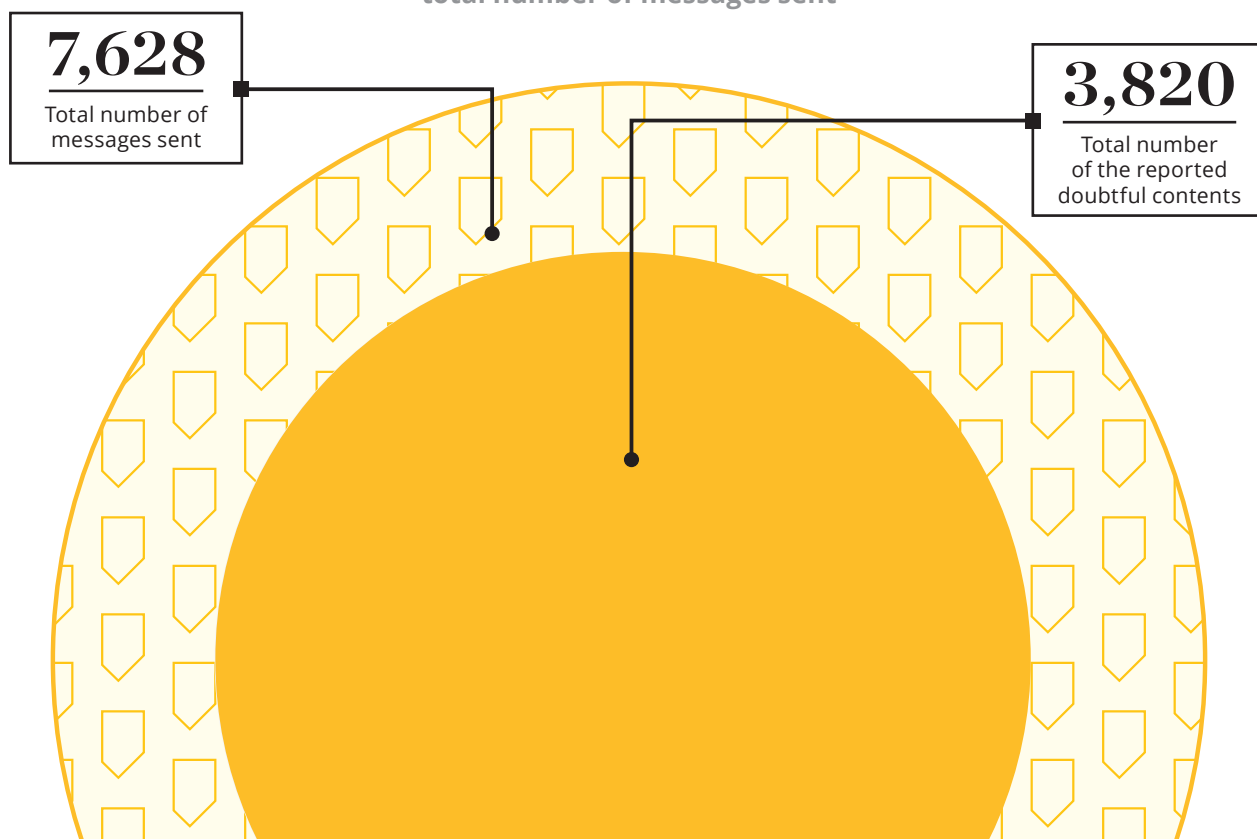
The share of people using the same platform more than once to send doubtful content among the total number of people who reported

5,652

Number of people who reported

1,119

Number of people who sent minimum two reports

Around one-fifth of a total number of 5,652 different reporting people sent reports at least two times.

The share of doubtful content, about which at least two reports were sent, in the total number of the reported doubtful contents.

3,620

Total number of the reported doubtful contents

966

Doubtful contents that were reported at least two times
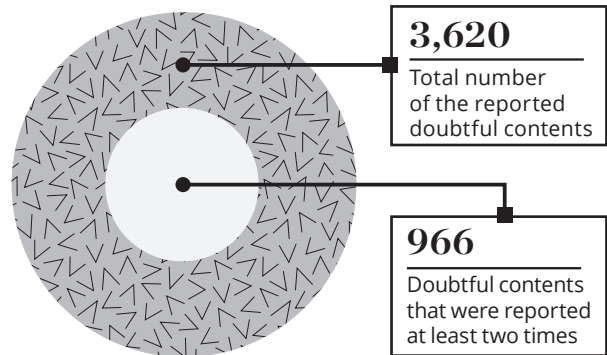
Around 26% of the doubtful contents reported were reported at least two times.

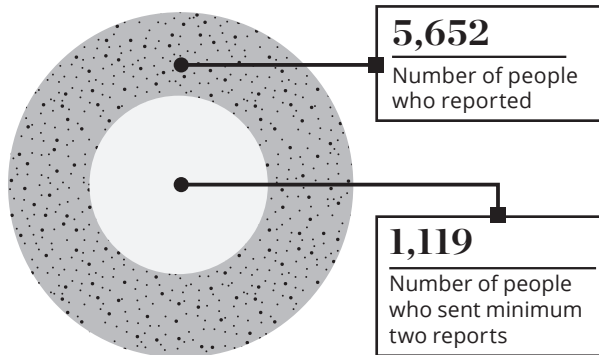Taking the number of the followers of teyit.org into consideration, December is observed to be one of the months with the greatest amount of reports, as a result of the continuous explosions and terror attacks.

Distribution of doubtful news by months and the increase in the number of followers on Twitter

■ Number of reports   ■ Number of followers
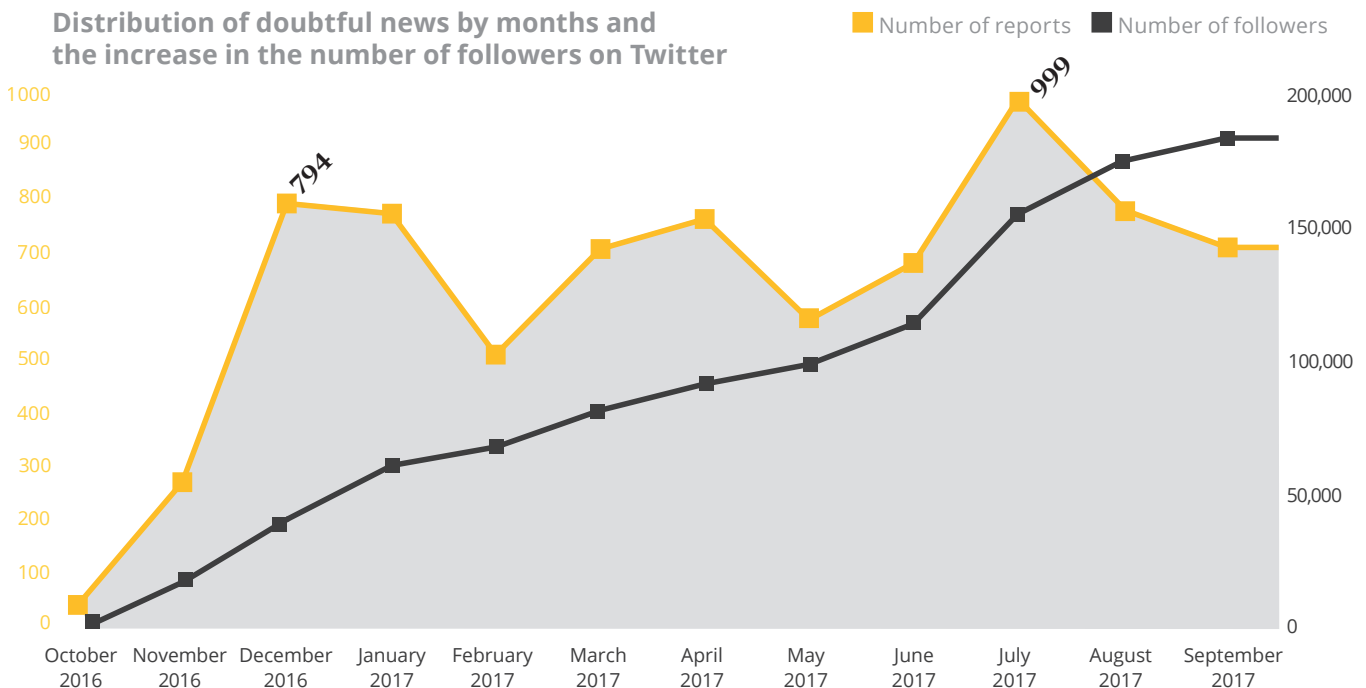
In early December, around one month after teyit.org started its publishing life, 18,000 people were following teyit.org on Twitter, and the number of reports reached 794. Similarly, in April, when the referendum about the Constitutional Amendment took place, a significant increase was observed. Finally; in July, which was the anniversary of the coup attempt that took place on 15 July 2016, there were claims about July 15th and claims about Syrians, which started with the claim of the rape of a Syrian pregnant woman, the number of reports reached maximum with 999. There were more than 115,000 people following teyit.org on Twitter then.

Twitter as a platform for political campaigns

Among all the reports sent, contents under topic "Politics" has the largest share with a rate of 51%.

Distribution of the reports to teyit.org based on topics

3,937

4,000
3,500
3,000
2,500
2,000
1,500
1,000
500
0

Politics | Education | Unrest, Coflicts and War | Environmental Issue | Arts, Culture and Entertainment | Science and Technology | Economy, Business & Finance | Crime, Law and Justice | Religion and Belief | Lifestyle and Leisure | Health | Human Interest | Sport | Arts, Culture and Entertainment | Weather | Urban Legend
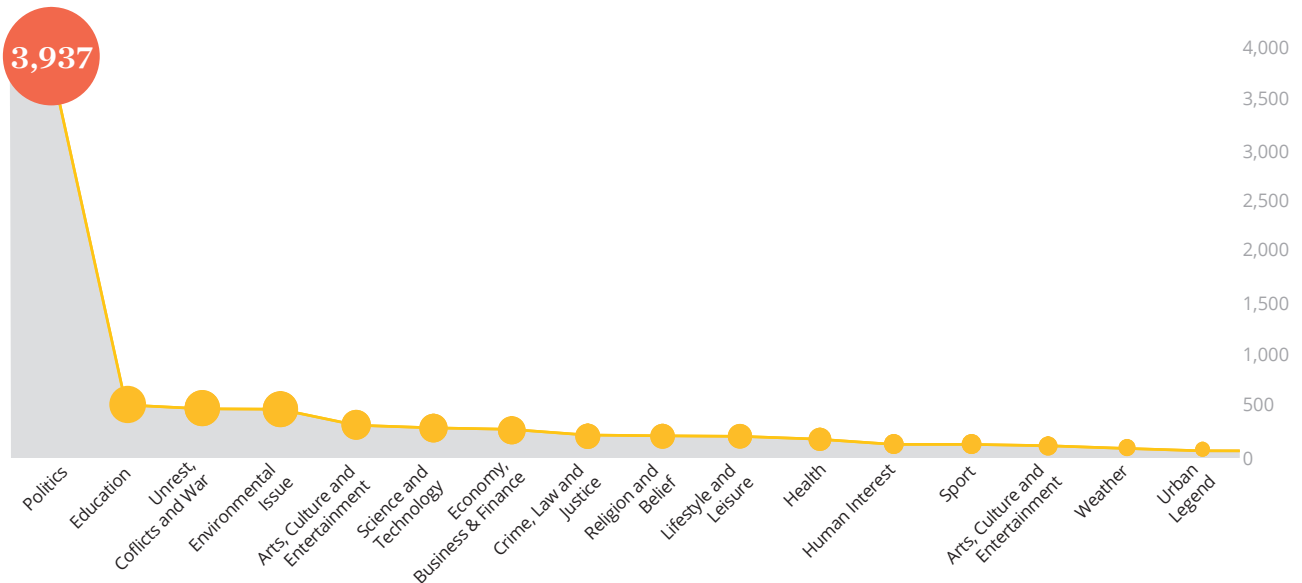
The most commonly used channel to send doubtful content to teyit.org is Twitter with a share of 54.16%, where teyit.org has around 200,000 followers.

Twitter is used more commonly than other platforms for the delivery of doubtful content to teyit.org, which can be understood by the fact that the users encounter political issues more on this platform. Twitter is particularly a platform used by the politicians, activists and journalists. It became politicized especially with the emergence of the ability to create political discourse and do activism through labeling campaigns. Such that, while Twitter was defined as a "social network" until 2016, it is now defined as a "news source".

Researches have shown that Twitter is one of the most significant platforms that could easily become politicized.

Particularly politicians and activist groups mobilize the bots on Twitter to emphasize their political campaigns, which artificializes the agenda on Twitter and contributes to the spreading of various inaccurate contents with the counter efforts of trolls or opposing groups aiming to fail or contort these political campaigns. Further, remaining anonymous on Twitter can also lead to discussing political issues without taking any responsibility and spreading of the intended message without any grounds.

Platforms used on the web for reporting doubtful content to teyit.org

37.86%	21.17%	17.06%	16.30%	7.62%
2,888	1,615	1,301	1,243	581
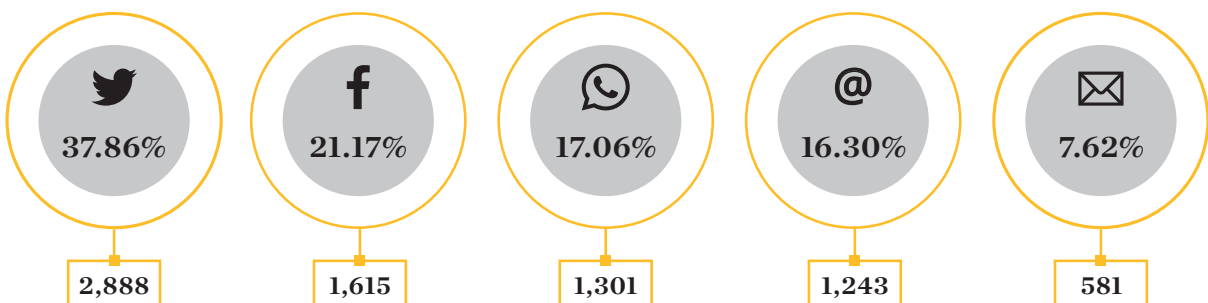
16.12% of the reports sent to teyit.org were concluded and published on teyit.org website or on social media under the title "WARNING". 10.76% of them were archived based on their importance, urgency and virality priorities. 62.5% of the reports were not published due to lack of sufficient information, lack of reliable information or lack of further proofs from news sites. 8.36% of them were excluded from analysis as they did not conform to the publishing policy and methodology of teyit.org.

Analysis and publishing rates of the reports sent to teyit.org

64.75%   8.36%   10.76%   16.12%

7,628 messages

- ■ Published
- ■ Archived
- ■ Not-published
- ■ No consideration
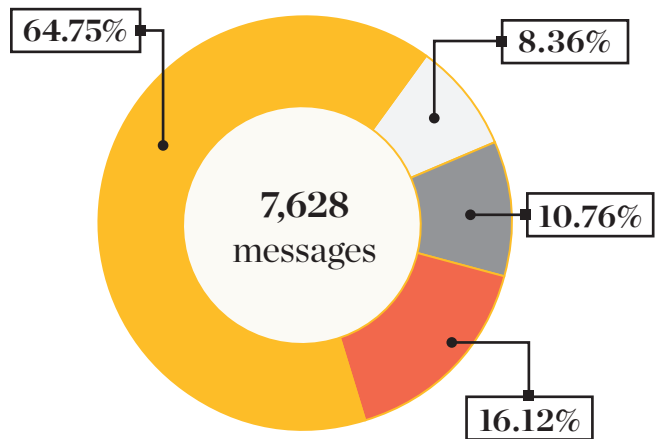
Manipulative power of meme and screenshots

It appears that the doubtful contents on social media can spread even faster through meme or screenshots. The users are able to clarify their points through images, this way of expression has the potential to spread fast, which lead to the use of meme and screenshots for the purposes of manipulation. The images of the documents supporting the official background of the claim also help the fast spreading of the claims. This can be understood from the fact

that 42.11% of the doubtful contents reported by the users include the "images" sent to teyit.org.

Meme can quickly become viral as long as they consider the cultural values and emotional reactions through a humorous perspective. It is difficult to identify and track meme as they do not have any digital link and they do not always protect the digital footsteps of their sources in every post.

Number of doubtful contents categorized based on their types

3,500					3,212
3,000					
2,500					
2,000					
1,500					
1,000					
500					
0					
Audio Record	Video	Other	News	Social Media Content	Image

moments of crisis and the need for accurate information

Distribution of the 15 most reported doubtful contents by months

114

The claim that ISIS
(Islamic State of Iraq and Syria)
burnt two Turkish soldiers
(22 December 2016)

These were not given
consideration within
the framework of the
methodology of teyit.org

41

The claim that the
propaganda images of
ISIS included posters
indicating Istanbul
(1 January 2017)

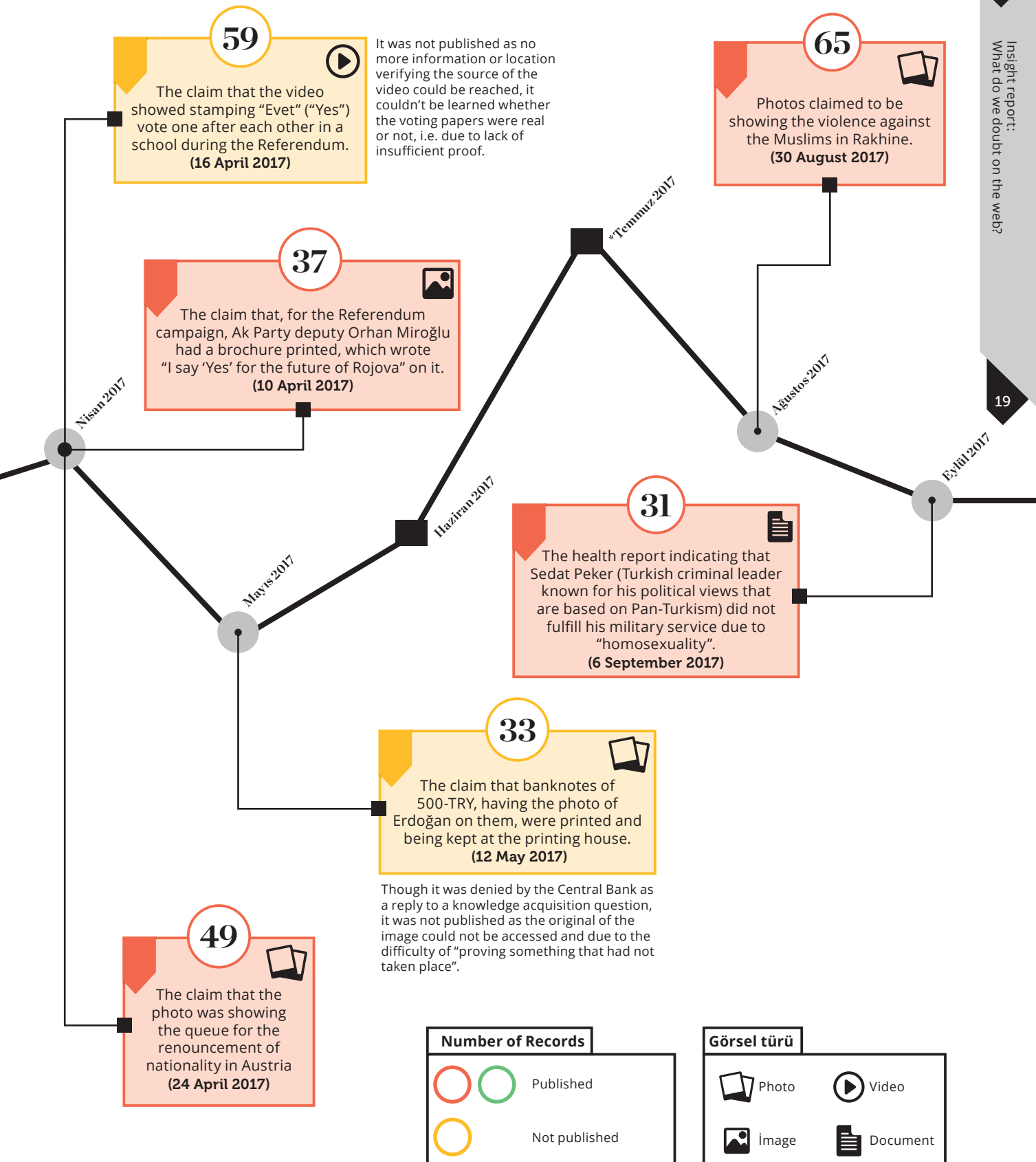These were not given
consideration within
the framework of the
methodology of teyit.org

40

Photos which were shared
with the claim that they
were from the explosion
that took place in Beşiktaş
(10 December 2017)

These photos were not published, although
they were actually from the site of the event,
due to the fact that teyit.org is not a "news site".

52

The claim that the Presidency
published a circular banishing the use
of the word "Hayırlı" (a word with the
meaning of a good thing but which also
includes the word "No" in Turkish)
(3 February 2017)

Aralık 2016

Ocak 2017

Mart 2017

Şubat 2017

31

The photos claimed
to have been taken
during the evacuation
of Eastern Aleppo
(11 December 2016)

31

The claim that
OSYM (Student Selection and
Placement Center) abolished
make-up examinations
(13 January 2017)

It was not published as only
one of the two circulating
photos could be verified
and no proof was obtained
about the other.

37

The claim that Iraq-Kurdistan
Management's flag was unfurled
to the mast in front of the State
Guesthouse at Istanbul
Atatürk Airport.
(26 Şubat 2017)

Kasım 2016

40

The claim that Ankara
Chief Police Station published
a document about the possibility
of a terror attack in Ankara.
(8 Kasım 2016)

Though it was verified by the sources from Ankara
Security General Directorate, it was not published
as there were no minimum 2 proofs that could be
reverified by all the users.

31

The claim that in Diyarbakır,
Ak Party opened a show card "Her Evet
Şeyh Sait ve Arkadaşlarına Bir Fatiha'dır", meaning
"Each Yes is an Al-Fatehah recited for Sheikh Said
(He was a Kurdish rebel aiming to revive the Islamic
caliphate and sultanate) and his Fellows"
(*Supporters of Justice and Development Party and Nationalist
Movement Party would vote for "yes" and supporters of opponent
parties such as Republican People's Party would vote for "no")
(24 March 2017)

Ekim 2016

59

The claim that the video showed stamping "Evet" ("Yes") vote one after each other in a school during the Referendum.
(16 April 2017)

It was not published as no more information or location verifying the source of the video could be reached, it couldn't be learned whether the voting papers were real or not, i.e. due to lack of insufficient proof.

65

Photos claimed to be showing the violence against the Muslims in Rakhine.
(30 August 2017)

37

The claim that, for the Referendum campaign, Ak Party deputy Orhan Miroğlu had a brochure printed, which wrote "I say 'Yes' for the future of Rojova" on it.
(10 April 2017)

*Temmuz 2017

Ağustos 2017

Eylül 2017

Nisan 2017

31

The health report indicating that Sedat Peker (Turkish criminal leader known for his political views that are based on Pan-Turkism) did not fulfill his military service due to "homosexuality".
(6 September 2017)

Haziran 2017

Mayıs 2017

33

The claim that banknotes of 500-TRY, having the photo of Erdoğan on them, were printed and being kept at the printing house.
(12 May 2017)

Though it was denied by the Central Bank as a reply to a knowledge acquisition question, it was not published as the original of the image could not be accessed and due to the difficulty of "proving something that had not taken place".

49

The claim that the photo was showing the queue for the renouncement of nationality in Austria
(24 April 2017)

Number of Records	
🔴 🟢	Published
🟡	Not published

Görsel türü			
🖼 Photo		▶ Video	
🖼 İmage		📄 Document	

*Apart from the above-stated doubtful contents, the claims about 15th July, which was the anniversary of the coup attempt that took place on 15 July 2016 and the claims about Syrians, which started with the claim of the rape of a Syrian pregnant woman, caused the amount of reporting to be more than the average.

In this section of the report, you can find insights about the reports spared for the topics of Politics, Education, Crisis and Environmental issue, which form 71% of all the messages sent.

topics of the

contents

the users

doubt

POLITICS

Among the contents that people doubted on the web and referred to teyit.org for verification, contents under the topic 'Politics' were reported the most with a rate of 51.61%. The sub-topics under this topic include government activities, acts related to deputies and other politicians, external politics, elections, political discussions and human right issues.

The rate of topic 'Politics' among all topics

7,628

Total number of reports

3,937

Total number of reports under the topic 'Politics
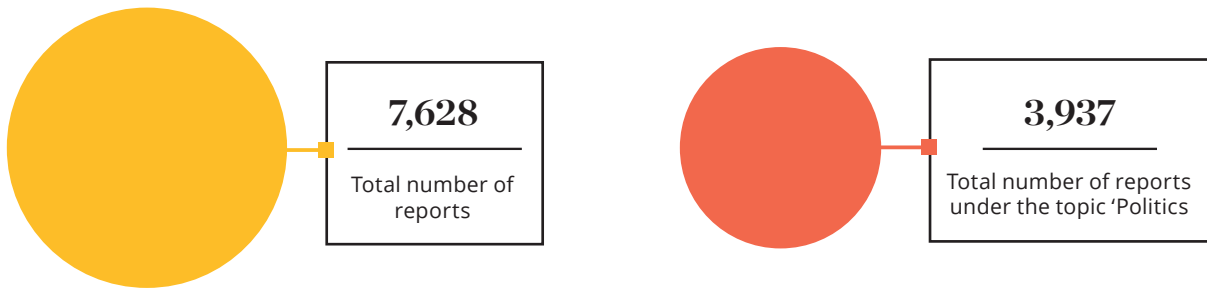
April 16th-Referendum about the constitutional amendment, July 15th -the anniversary of the Coup Attempt, Declaration of State of Emergency, Decree Laws, the external policy of Turkey, the ongoing civil war in Syria, the state of Syrian immigrants in Turkey were all influential in this topic's being placed on the top.

Polarization, which started to make itself apparent in daily life, moved to a different level with the Referendum that took place on April 16th for a constitutional amendment. 1 referendum and 4 elections, the change of the government system, subsequent crises, the rigid internal and external politics adopted

by AK Party (Justice and Development Party) all contributed to the deepening of polarization.

The declaration of the state of emergencyw hich started after the July 15th -Coup Attempt and has lasted more than one year, the arrangements made with decree-laws and FETO (Fettullah Terrorist Organization) lawsuits became the determining issues of the agenda. Deputies who got arrested once their inviolability was abolished, ByLock operations, journalists who were put on trial with the claim that they were related to FETO (Fettullah Terrorist Organization) caused the doubtful contents under the topic 'Politics' to spread more.

The distribution of reports on doubtful contents under the topic 'Politics' by months and the increase in the number of followers on Twitter

■ Number of reports
■ Number of followers
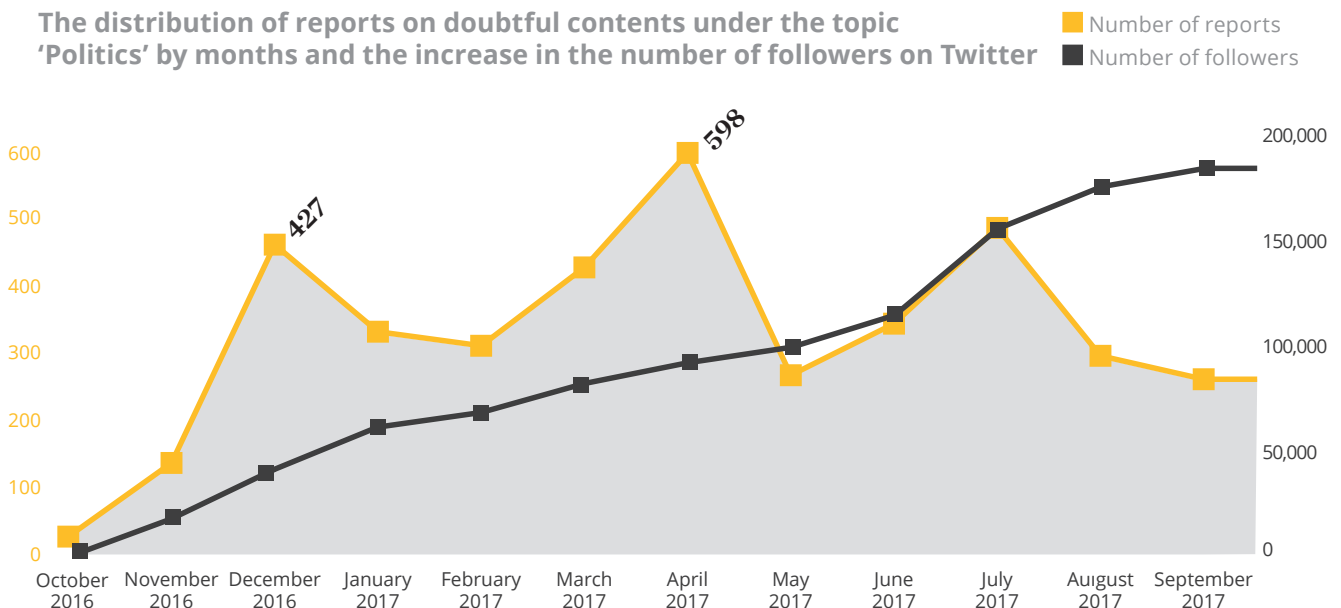
Finally; the ongoing civil war in Syria, ISIS and the referendum organized by Iraq-Kurdistan Regional Management had determinant role on the agenda. More than 3 million Syrian refugees who came to Turkey to escape from the war happening in their region, were also among the most commonly discussed issues in Turkey.

3,937 out of all the messages that the followers of teyit.org doubted on the web and sent to teyit.org for verification, were categorized under the topic 'Politics'.

17% of these individual messages referring to 1,933 individual contents, were verified, analyzed and published on the website, or they were shared on the social media accounts of teyit.org under the title "ATTENTION". 8% of these messages were not given consideration within the framework of the methodology of teyit.org and 5% of them were archived as they couldn't meet the criteria for prioritization.

Conclusion rates of the doubtful contents sent under the topic 'Politics'

70.61%   4.62%

3,937   7.72%

17.04%

■ Published   ■ Archived

■ Not-published   ☐ No consideration
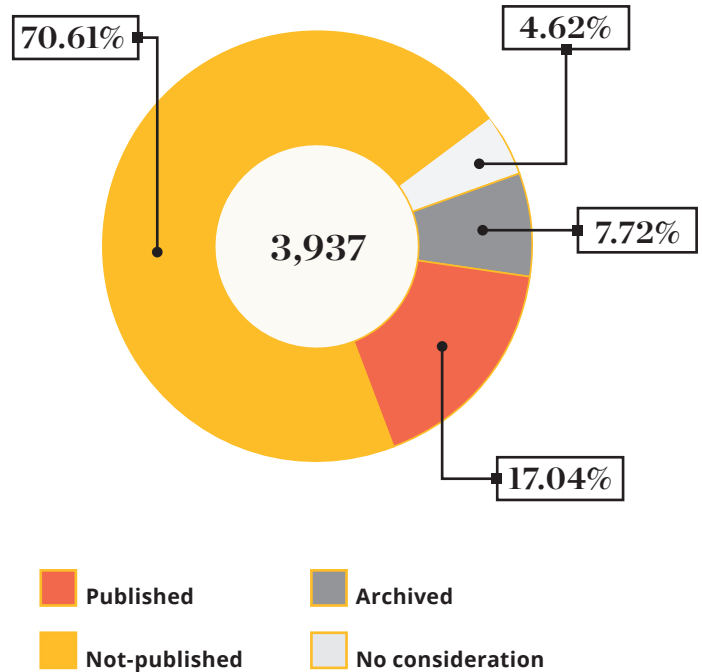
5 most reported doubtful contents under the topic 'Politics'

The claim that the video showed stamping "Evet" ("Yes") vote one after each other in a school during the Referendum.
16 April 2017

The claim that the Presidency published a circular banishing the use of the word "Hayırlı" (a word with the meaning of a good thing but which also includes the word "No" in Turkish)
3 February 2017

The claim that the photo was showing the queue for the renouncement of nationality in Austria
24 April 2017

The claim that Ankara Chief Police Station published a document about the possibility of a terror attack in Ankara.
8 November 2017

The claim that Iraq-Kurdistan Management's flag was unfurled to the mast in front of the State Guesthouse at Istabul Atatürk Airport.
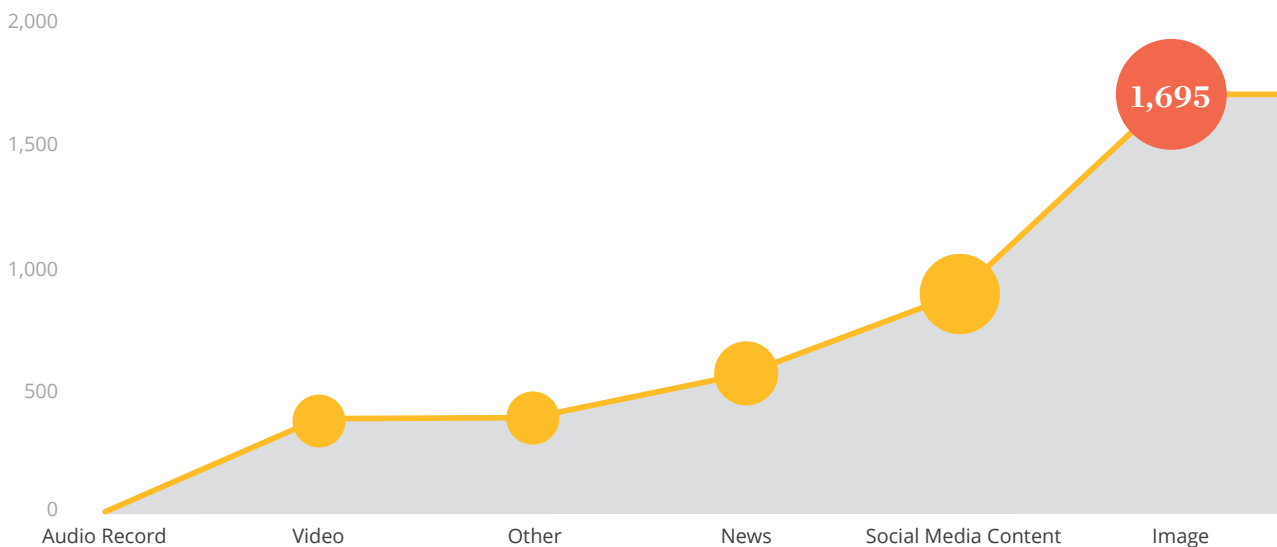**26 February 2017**

The rate of the topic 'Politics' among all doubtful contents that were published

1,230

54.55%
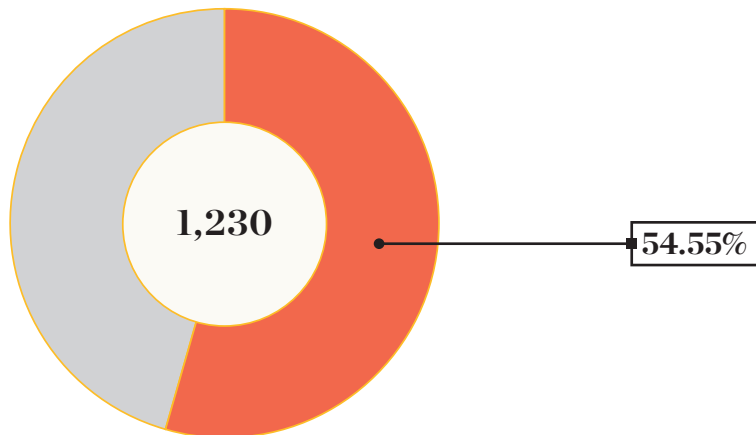
The channel through which the doubtful contents under the topic 'Politics', among all other topics, were sent to teyit.org

51%	53%	50%	50%	52%
1,497	859	650	307	624

The type of the doubtful contents under the topic 'Politics'

2,000

1,500

1,000

500

0

1,695

Audio Record   Video   Other   News   Social Media Content   Image
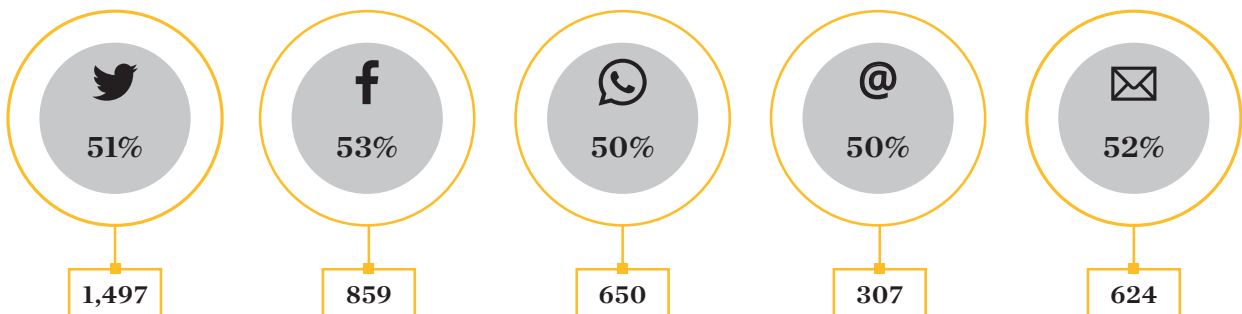
EDUCATION

Among the contents that people doubted on the web and referred to teyit.org for verification, contents under the topic 'Education' were reported the second most with a rate of 6.78%. The contents of this topic range from curriculum changes to the arrangements about the education system and to the Contents related to universities.

The rate of topic 'Education' among all other topics

7,628
Total number of reports

515
Total number of reports under the topic 'Education'
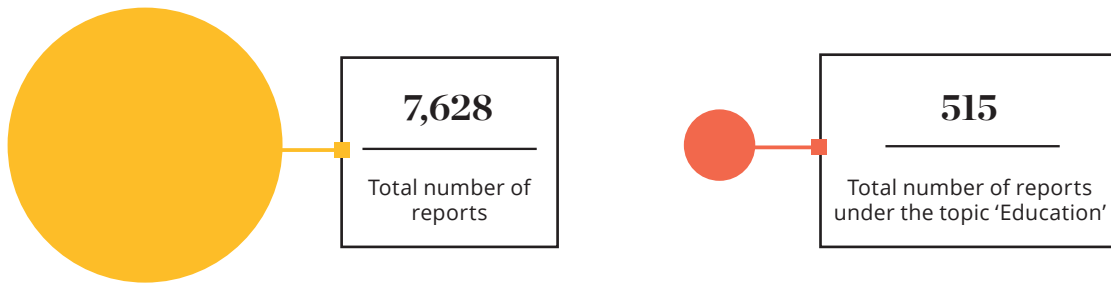
Considering the fact that no student could graduate in 15 years with the system and curriculum he/she had started, it could be possible to say that all the arrangements and changes about education led to uncertainty. This uncertainty caused the students and their families to doubt the new rules, even if the explanations came from official authorities. Such that, LYS (Undergraduate Placement Exam) results announced on the official website of OSYM (Student Selection and Placement Center) were sent to teyit.org directly with the link of OSYM's website, for the verification of their accuracy.

The conflict caused by curriculum changes

Particularly in September 2017, the changes made in curriculum and examination systems and the shares about the contents of the books published by MEB (the Ministry of National Education) were frequently suspected of and were reported to teyit.org.

The most common of these were; the changes in curricula, the addition of July 15th Coup Attempt, July 15th ceremonies at schools and the changes made about the certain days and weeks celebrated/ memorialized at schools. Removal of evolution theory from the curriculum took much attention of the scientific community. Finally; the claims that students were being encouraged to go to Imam Hatip High Schools (Religious Vocational High Schools) and the concerns about the increasing emphasis on religion in the curriculum caused the emergence of such conflict and doubt. Apart from these, the users who took advantage of this concern put forward similar other inaccurate claims and contents.
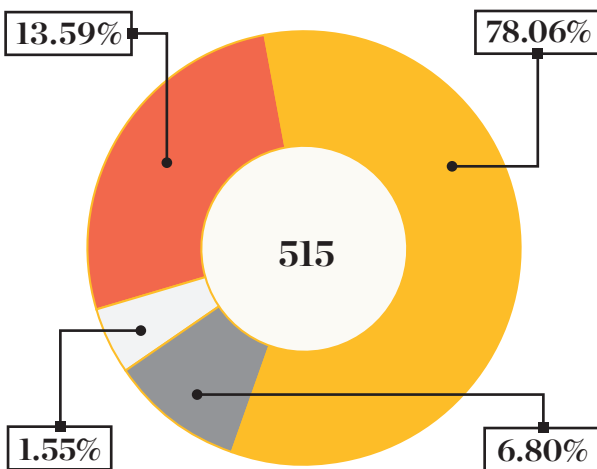
515 reports sent to teyit.org about 209 individual contents, were categorized under the topic 'Education'. 14% of these individual messages were verified, analyzed and published on teyit.org website, or they were shared on the social media accounts of teyit.org under the title "ATTENTION". 2% of these messages were not given consideration within the framework of the methodology and publishing policy of teyit.org and 7% of them were archived as they couldn't meet the criteria for prioritization.

The distribution of reports on doubtful contents under the topic 'Education' by months and the increase in the number of followers on Twitter

■ Number of reports
■ Number of followers

138

October 2016 | November 2016 | December 2016 | January 2017 | February 2017 | March 2017 | April 2017 | May 2017 | June 2017 | July 2017 | August 2017 | September 2017
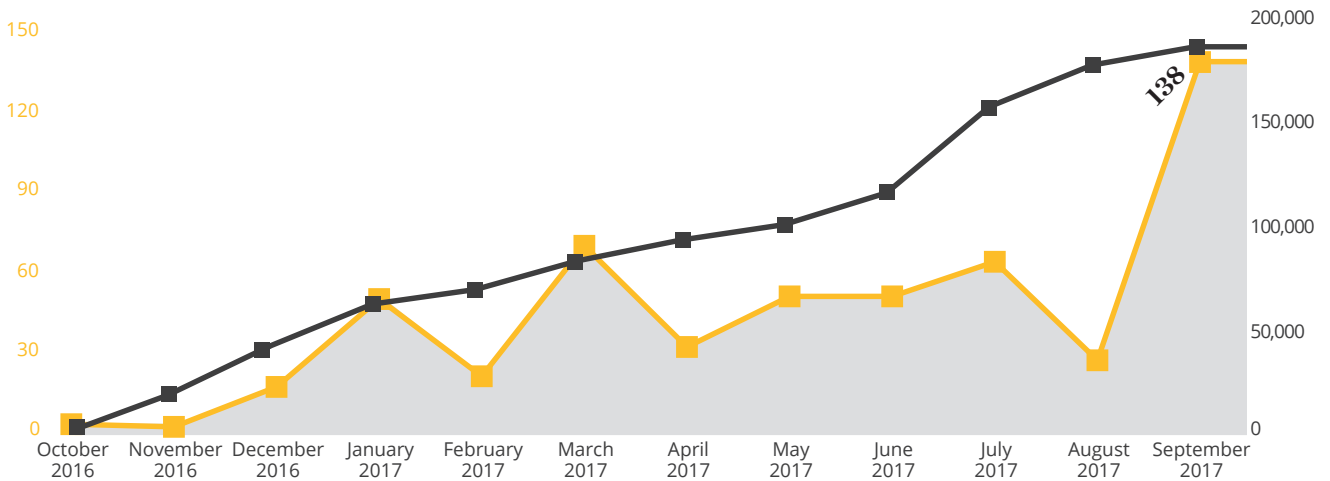
Conclusion rates of the doubtful contents sent under the topic 'Education'

13.59%

78.06%

515

1.55%

6.80%

■ Published
■ Archived
■ Not-published
□ No consideration

5 most reported doubtful contents under the topic 'Education'

The claim that OSYM (Student Selection and Placement Center) abolished make-up examinations
13 January 2017

The claim that 23rd April (National Sovereignty and Children's Day), 29th October (Republic Day) and 19th May (The Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sport Day) were excluded from the list of Certain Days and Weeks to be celebrated/memorialized.
15 September 2017

The claim that in the primary school book for 4th graders, it is written that it would be wrong to say "Günaydın" (Good Morning) to a person you have encountered (that it would be better to use religious greetings, instead).
6 September 2017

The claim that Prof. Dr. Gökalp Kahraman announced on the website of Ege University that he would have the students pass with 100 points if they donated 100 TRY to certain (Mehmetçik Foundation, July 15th Martyrs' and Veterans' Foundation and the Red Crescent) organizations.
1 July 2017

The claim that in the poster prepared for the opening ceremony of Ibn Haldun University, it wrote "Ibne" (meaning gay in Turkish) instead of "Ibn".
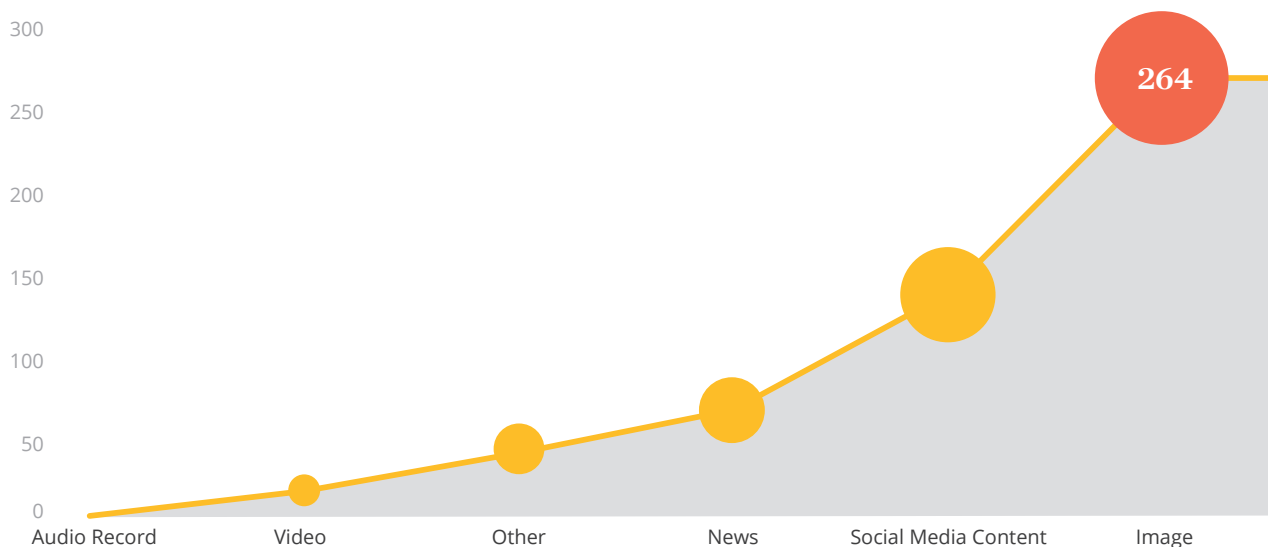**13 May 2017**

The rate of the topic 'Education' among all doubtful contents that were published
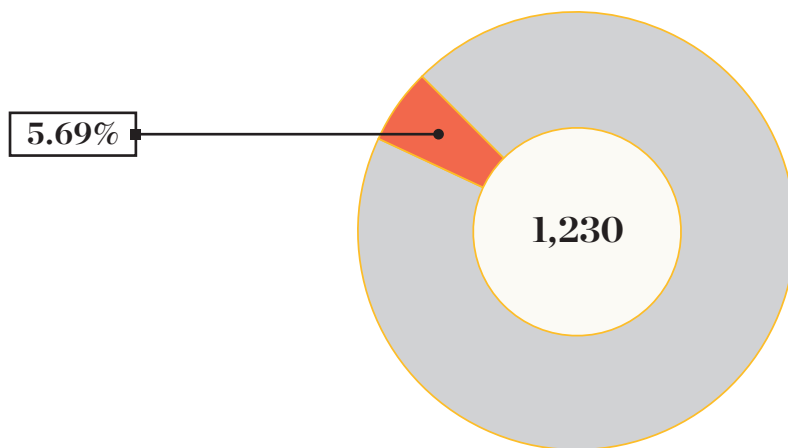
5.69%

1,230

The channel through which the doubtful contents under the topic 'Education', among all other topics, were sent to teyit.org

6.34%	5.39%	4.38%	7.24%	4.65%
233	87	78	90	27

The type of the doubtful contents under the topic 'Education'

300

264

250

200

150

100

50

0

Audio Record | Video | Other | News | Social Media Content | Image
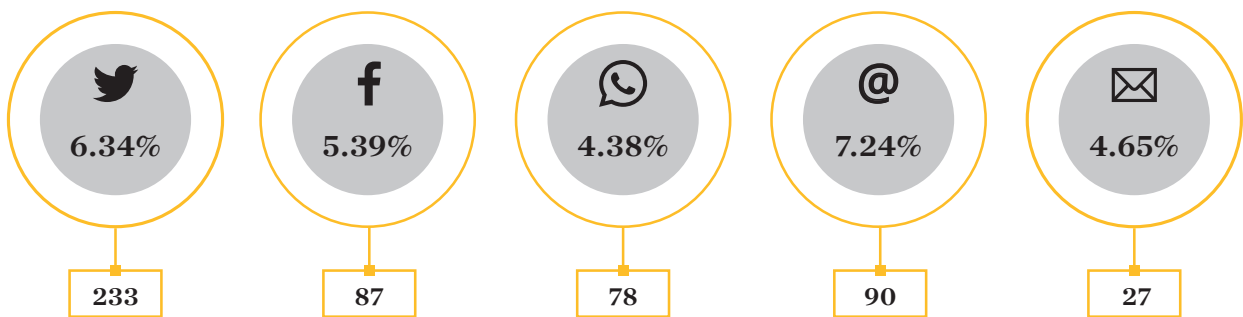
CRISIS SITUATION

Among the contents that people doubted on the web and referred to teyit.org for verification, contents under the topic 'crisis' (unrest, conflicts and war) were reported the third most with a rate of 6.27%. The contents under this topic range from the photos and videos which started to circulate on the web following the armed and bomb attacks to the images claimed to be from the civil war in Syria and to the tragedy in Rakhine.

The rate of topic 'Crisis' among all topics

7,628	478
Total number of reports	Total number of reports under the topic 'Crisis'
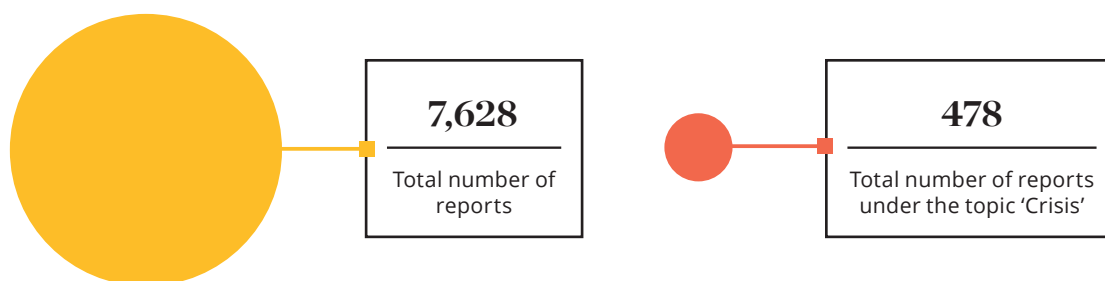
2016 was a traumatic year for Turkey. The year, which started with the bomb attack at Sultanahmet Square on January 12th, ended with the armed attack that took place at Reina nightclub in the night of December 31st. Over twenty bomb and armed attacks took place in different areas of Turkey.

Many people lost their lives in these attacks. The coup attempt which happened on 15 July 2016 by a group of soldiers within the Turkish Armed Forces increased the level of tension and trauma. The declaration of the state of emergency contributed to this context of unreliability and tension even more.

A challenging year that passed with attacks: 2016

The attack aiming the Police Office in Diyarbakır, which happened on 4 December 2016, 10 days after teyit.org started its publishing life, users of Twitter learned that the doubtful information that emerged during a crisis could be verified through teyit.org.

The explosions that took place in Istanbul, Beşiktaş on 10 December 2016, the bombed attack that happened in Kayseri on 17 December 2016, the assassination attempt to Turkey's Ambassador of Russia, Andrey Karlov, the events that came out during

the evacuation of the opponents in Eastern Aleppo, the video claimed to be showing the burning of two Turkish soldiers by ISIS and finally, the armed attack on Reina night club, which happened on 31 December 2016 significantly increased the amount of doubtful news sent to teyit.org for verification in December. The number of doubtful contents sent in December was 250 more of the contents that were sent the previous month. The number of followers on Twitter, which had been 18,000 in early December, reached 41,000 in late December.

The distribution of reports on doubtful contents under the topic 'Crisis' by months and the increase in the number of followers on Twitter

■ Number of reports
■ Number of followers
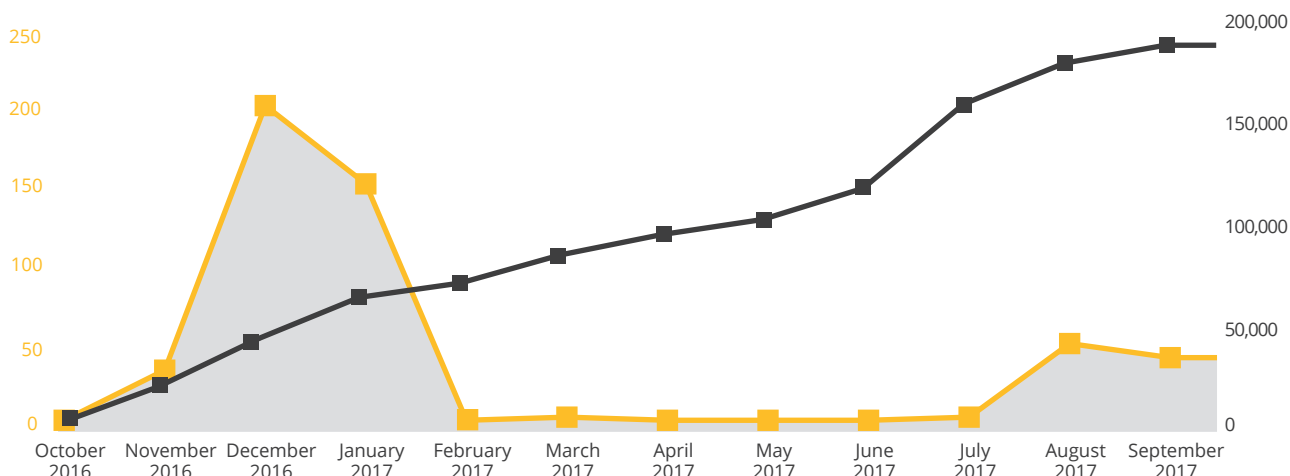
Last year, 478 messages about 71 doubtful contents were sent to teyit.org under the topic 'crisis'. 15% of these doubtful contents were verified, analyzed and published on teyit.orgwebsite, or they were shared on the social media accounts of teyit.org under the title "ATTENTION". 35% of the messages under the topic 'crisis' were not given consideration within the framework of the methodology of teyit.org. 6 messages on average were sent for each doubtful news under the topic 'crisis'. This average is significant (considering the fact that it is 2 in other topics) in that, it shows the people's desire to seek more for accurate information during the times of .

5 most reported doubtful contents under the topic 'Crisis'

The video displayed on video sharing platforms, which was claimed to be showing the burning of two Turkish soldiers by ISIS

22 December 2016

Photos claimed to be showing the violence against the Rohingya Muslims.

30 August 2017

The claim that the propaganda images of ISIS included posters indicating Istanbul

1 January 2017

Photos which were shared with the claim that they were from the explosion that took place in Beşiktaş

10 December 2016

The photos claimed to have been taken during the evacuation of Eastern Aleppo
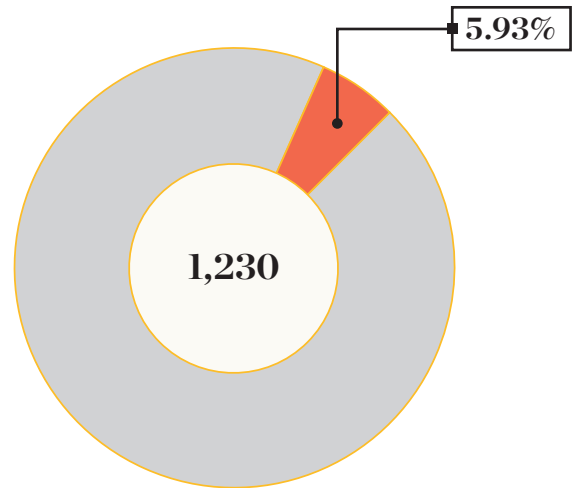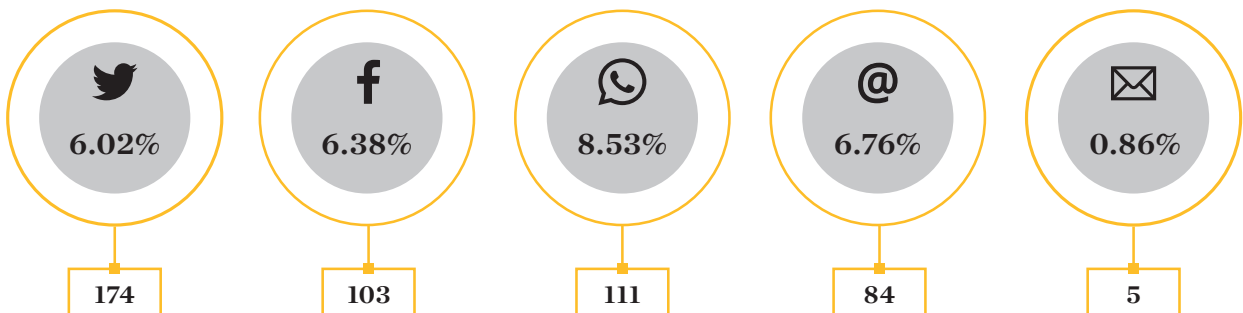
11 December 2017

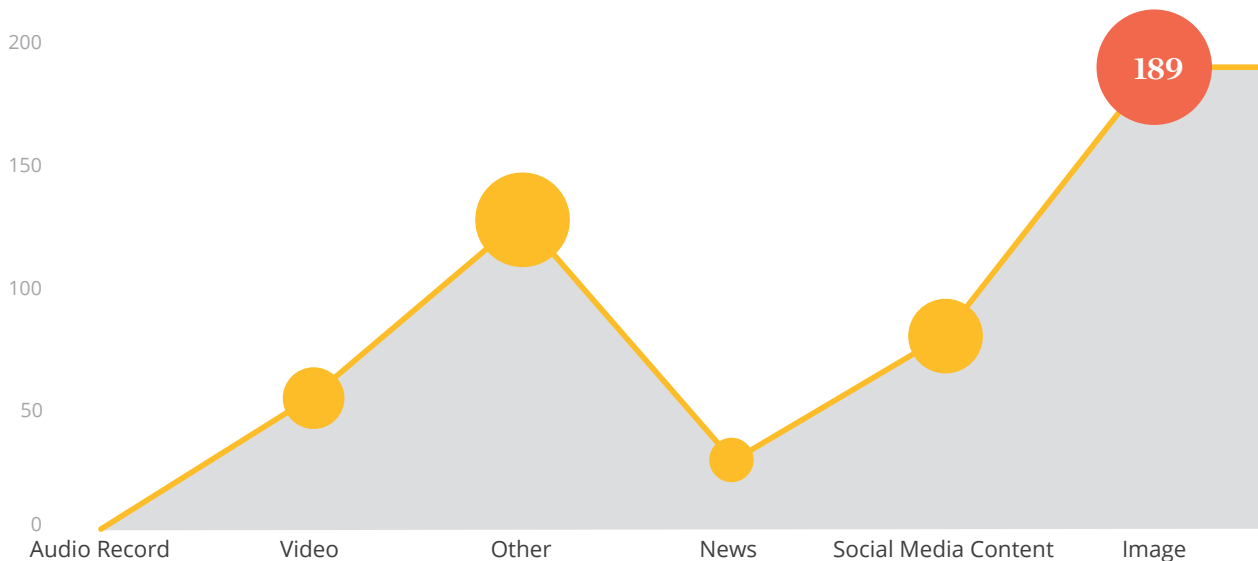**The rate of the topic 'Crisis' among all doubtful contents that were published**
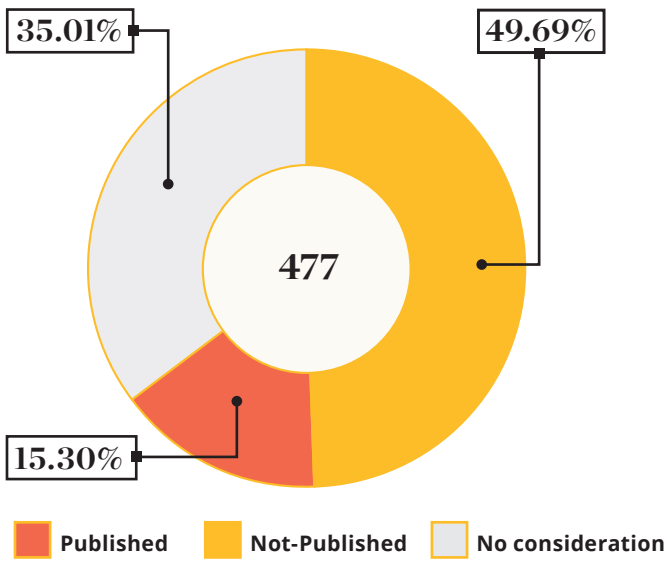
35.01%

49.69%

477

15.30%

The rate of the topic 'Crisis' among all doubtful contents that were published

5.93%

1,230

■ **Published**   ■ **Not-Published**   ■ **No consideration**

The channel through which the doubtful contents under the topic 'crisis', among all other topics, were sent to teyit.org

6.02%	6.38%	8.53%	6.76%	0.86%
174	103	111	84	5

The type of the doubtful contents under the topic 'Crisis'

189

200

150

100

50

0

Audio Record   Video   Other   News   Social Media Content   Image

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

Among the doubtful contents people sent to teyit.org, 'Environmental issue' was another important topic with a rate of 6.20%. The messages under this topic range from power policies to the zoning of natural areas for construction, animal rights and to air pollution.

The rate of topic 'Environmental issue' among all topics

7,628
Total number of reports

459
Total number of reports under the topic 'environmental issue'
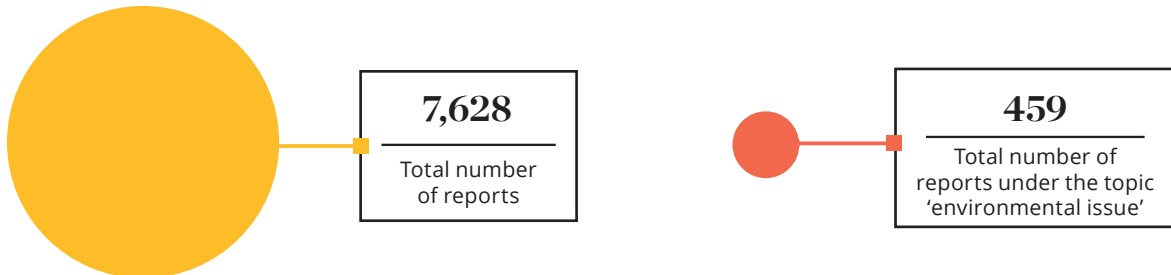
Mistrust to the decisions taken for cities and natural areas

The data about the reports showed that the contents under the topic 'environmental issue' came to the forefront among the other topics.

The social events that took place following the decisions to pull down Emek Cinema and Taksim Gezi Park drew attention to the irrevocable changes in cities and the discussions about the living space.

Construction policies about cities and natural areas, zoning of the area surrounding Anıtkabir (Ataturk's monumental tomb) for construction, the fire that broke out in Sürmene in 2016, restoration of the Topkapı Palace, the damage given to the Forests of the North by the construction works of the 3rd Bridge and 3rd Airport in Istanbul were the sources of the doubtful contents sent in 2016 and in 2017 under the topic 'Environmental issue'.

The distribution of reports on doubtful contents under the topic 'Environmental issue' by months and the increase in the number of followers on Twitter

■ Number of reports   ■ Number of followers
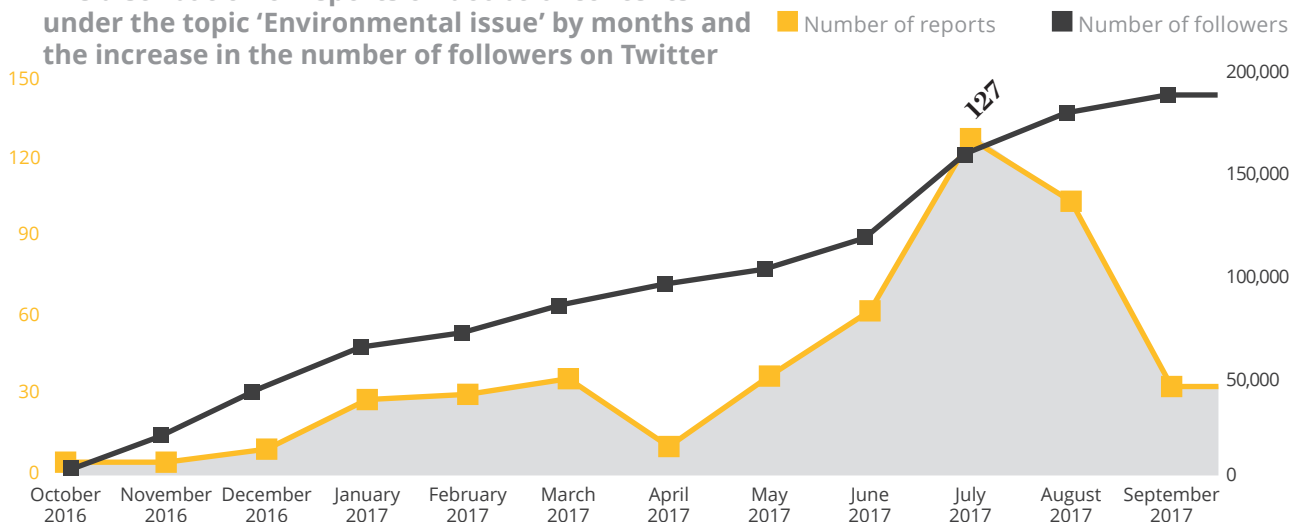
Due to the change of the Zoning Regulation in July 2017, the increasing amount of constructions in summer months, acceptance of the zoning plans at various municipal councils, discussion of the post-earthquake gathering points at the anniversary of the earthquake of July 17th in 1999 and the increase in the number of forest fires, the number of reports sent under this topic increased in summer months.

It is possible to say that doubtful contents sent to teyit.org could be categorized under titles as 'changes in zoning' and 'the projects planned to be carried out at historical sites'.

Last year, 459 messages about 251 doubtful contents were sent to teyit.org under the topic 'Environmental issue'. 9% of these doubtful contents were verified, analyzed and published on teyit.org website, or they were shared on the social media accounts of teyit.org under the title "ATTENTION". 1% of the messages under the topic 'Environmental issue' were not given consideration within the framework of the methodology of teyit.org and 17% of them were archived as they couldn't meet the criteria for prioritization 75% of the

Conclusion rates of the doubtful contents sent under the topic 'Environmental issue'

0.65%   73.86%

459

16.56%   8.93%

■ Published   ■ Archived
■ Not published   □ No consideration
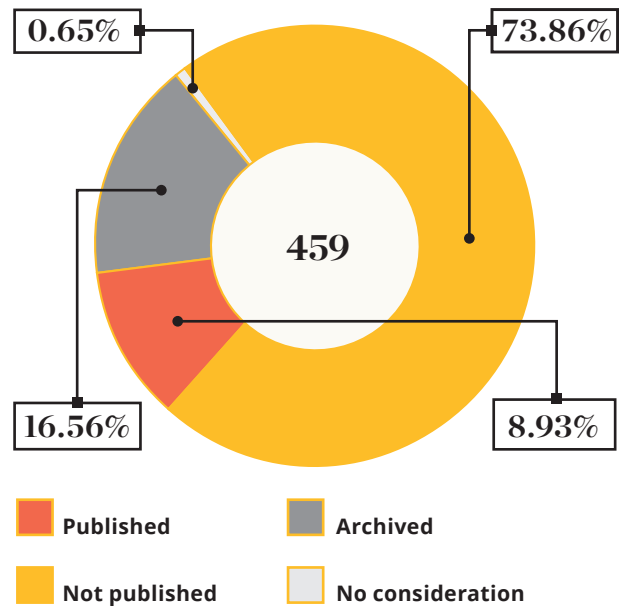
20 (making up the half of all doubtful contents reported in this category) most reported doubtful contents under the topic 'Environmental issue' were not published as analyses, as they were accurate.
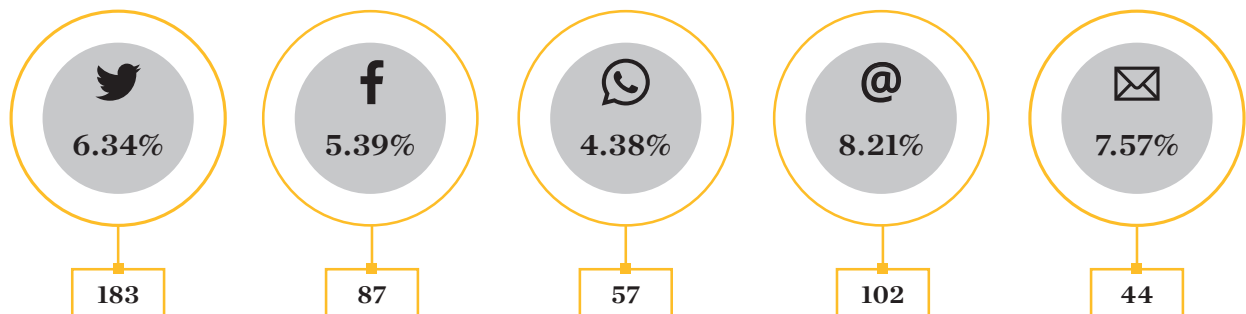
5 most reported doubtful contents under the topic 'Environmental issue'

The claim about the zoning of the area surrounding Anıtkabir (Ataturk's monumental tomb) for construction
17 July 2017

The claim that Ataturk Forest Farm land was sold to the US Embassy
14 August 2017

The claim that circumcision feast was organized at Ephesus Ancient Town
28 June 2017

The claim that 12,000-year-old rocks in Hasankeyf were blown up using dynamites
15 August 2017

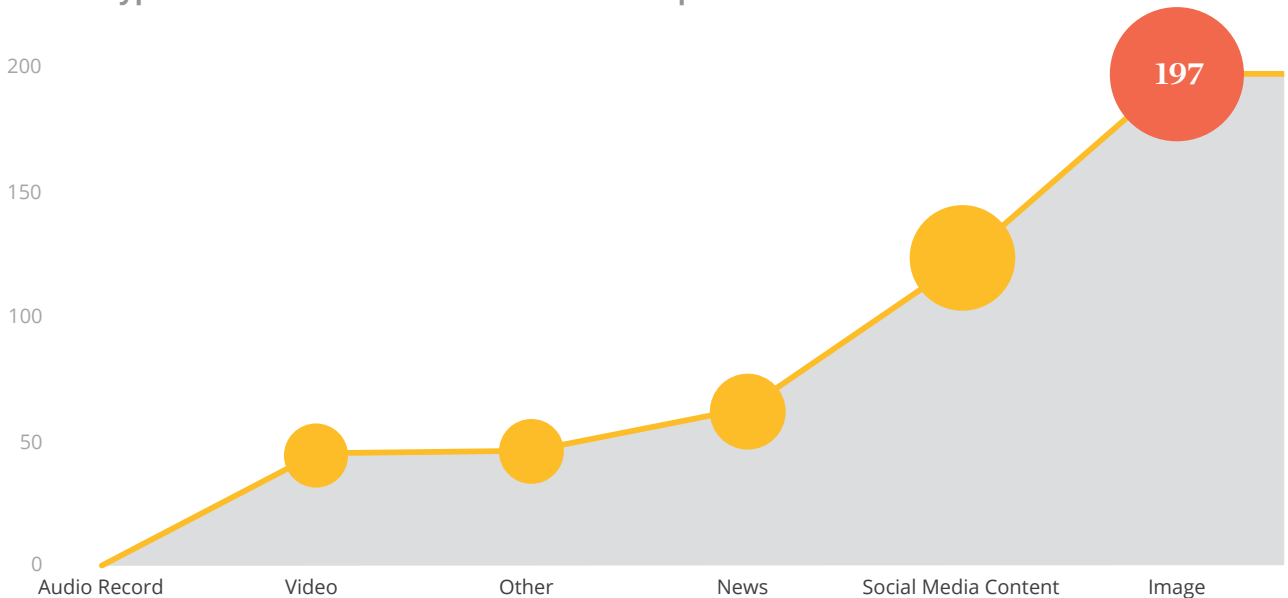Photos claimed to be belonging to the construction site of the 3rd Airport
02 August 2017

The rate of the topic 'Environmental issue' among all doubtful contents that were published
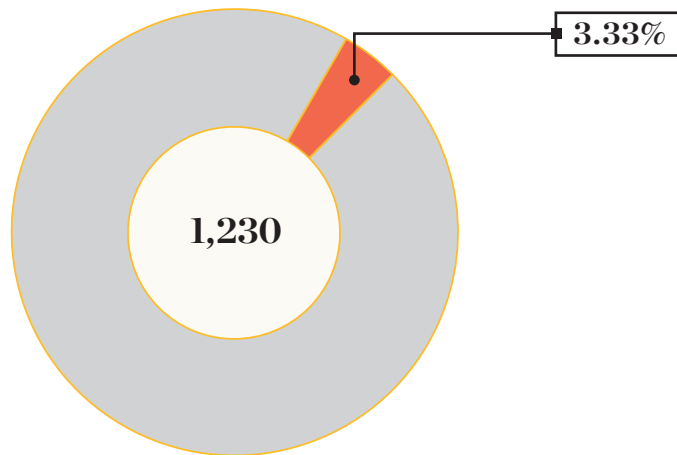
3.33%

1,230

The channel through which the doubtful contents under the topic 'Environmental issue', among all other topics, were sent to teyit.org

6.34%	5.39%	4.38%	8.21%	7.57%
183	87	57	102	44

The type of the doubtful contents under the topic 'Environmental issue'

197

200

150

100

50

0

Audio Record · Video · Other · News · Social Media Content · Image

Analyses

BEŞİKTAŞ

At the night of 10 December 2016, two bomb attacks took place near Vodafone Park Stadium in Beşiktaş, during the football match between Beşiktaş and Bursaspor. In the attack which aimed at the police waiting around the stadium, 39 police and 7 civil persons were killed and more than 200 people were injured.

The bombed attack in Beşiktaş was the final loop of a series of attacks that happened one after another since 2015. Another major attack was the armed attack that happened at Istanbul Ataturk Airport in June 2016, where 42 people lost their lives.

The fact that the attack took place in a central location like Beşiktaş after a football match, fed the doubts and fears. While the weakness of intelligence services was on the agenda, some were seeking for the signs of external powers behind these attacks and some others were trying to find the target of the attacks through conspiracy theories.

Researches focusing on conspiracy theories show that the decrease observed in the perception of control caused people to believe more in the conspiracy theories. People think that using conspiracy theories, they can rebuild their feelings for order and events.

In the last two years, Turkey was shaken by the news of new attacks and had doubts about the security precautions taken. The feeling that attacks could happen anywhere and nobody was safe, kept feeding conspiracy theories throughout the year 2016.

"President of the Republic, Erdoğan passed from the area of the Beşiktaş attack 15 minutes before the attack"

Special Intelligence Manager at Sabah Newspaper, Abdurrahman Şimşek attended a program at A Haber (A News) TV channel following the attack that took place in Beşiktaş on 10 December 2016 and claimed that the President of the Republic, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan went past the stadium 15 minutes before the attack.
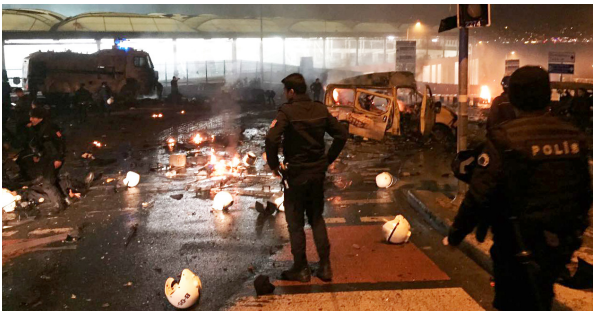
With this claim, a false belief came out that the actual target of the attack was the President of the Republic, Erdoğan. Erdoğan attended three different programs in Istanbul on December 10th. The last program he had attended before the attack took place was Necip Fazıl Kısakürek Award Ceremony and he went to Huber Mansion in Tarabya after that.

It was easy to learn from the reporters of the Presidency that Beşiktaş was not among the places the President Erdoğan passed by on his way back. On the other hand, it was easier for conspiracy theoreticians who claimed that the attack directly aimed the President, to see this "bigger game" rather than trying to verify the information.

Teyit follow-up

Teyit follow-up Journalists such as Meryem Gayberi, who had written that the President passed from the attack scene, erased their tweets stating that the claim was not true.

Meryem Gayberi
@meryemgayberi

Patlamadan 15 dakika önce Cumhurbaşkanımız oradan geçmiş. A Haber'de konuşuluyor.

22:55 · 10 Ara 16

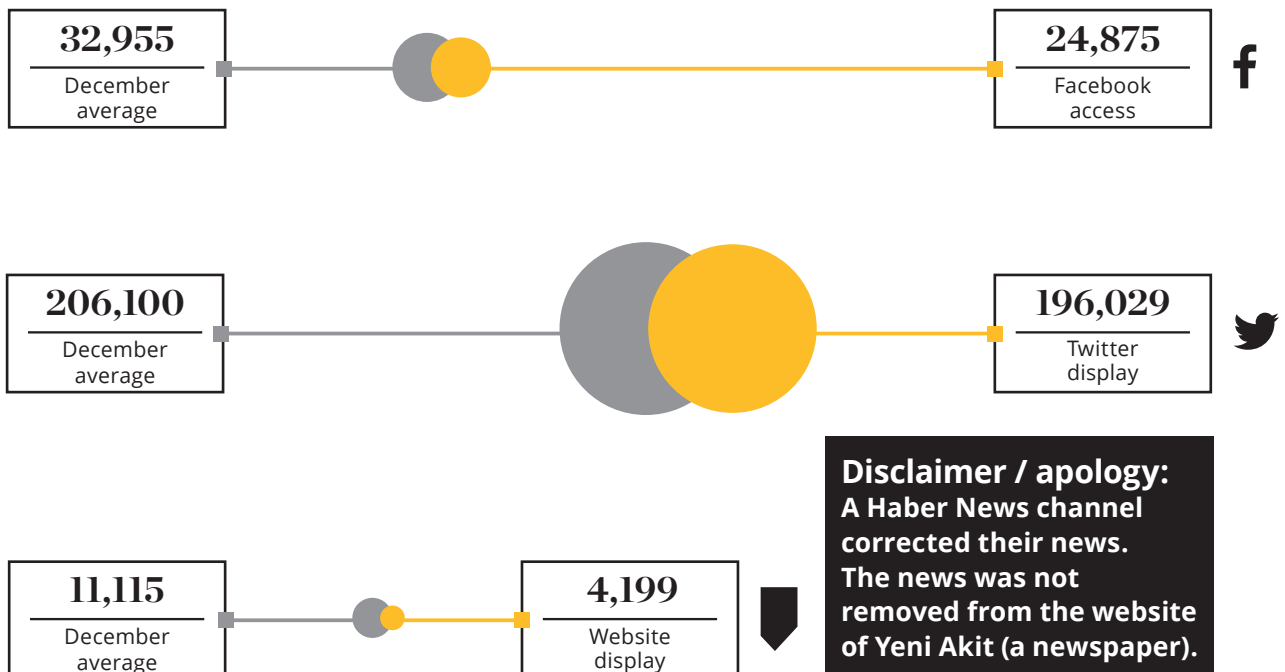In A Haber News program, where the claim was put forward, it was declared some minutes later that protocol vehicles did not pass from the scene of the attack as claimed.

Total number of reports about Beşiktaş attack:

45

The claim that there was an attack on the route used by Erdoğan, was prevented before it spread in a way that it would underestimate the severity of the attack.

What was on the agenda?

The Ministry of Internal Affairs stated that in the operations carried out in 11 cities, 235 persons who were detected to be acting on behalf of a terrorist organization and making propaganda for terrorism through the social media, were taken under arrest. The Prime Minister Yıldırım, the leader of CHP (Republican People's Party) Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and the leader of MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) Bahçeli came together to discuss the terrorist attacks. 4 persons praising the Beşiktaş attack got arrested. The Syrian army declared an official victory in Aleppo. Erdoğan said: "I declare a national mobilization against all terrorist organizations."

Data: 11.12.2016

32,955		24,875
December average		Facebook access

f

206,100		196,029
December average		Twitter display

11,115		4,199
December average		Website display

Disclaimer / apology:
A Haber News channel corrected their news. The news was not removed from the website of Yeni Akit (a newspaper).

BBC started live broadcasting 3 minutes after the Beşiktaş explosion

Following the bomb attack that happened in Beşiktaş, Ankara Metropolitan Mayor of the period, Melih Gökçek posted a tweet claiming that a BBC reporter booked a hotel room with a view of the explosion scene and started live broadcasting only 3 minutes after the explosion had taken place. According to the official declarations, the attack took place at 22:29 in Turkish local time and according to the claims, BBC started live broadcasting at 22:23 from a hotel room close to the scene of the attack.

To check this claim, teyit.org team accessed the records of the World Bulletin program with the help of a BBC personnel. The records taken from BBC News Center displayed that, the first broadcast about the Beşiktaş explosion was performed thirty minutes after the explosion had taken place, i.e. at 23:00:23, based on the agency data from London studio.

The place claimed to be 'a hotel room booked by BBC' was indeed BBC's Beşiktaş office. BBC reporter Mark Lowen performed the live broadcast from the office at 00.01.25. That means, the live broadcast was not performed 3 minutes after the explosion but one and half an hour later.

International media organizations such as BBC and CNN had long been accused of being spies, and their staff were accused of being the pawn of external forces, which

İbrahim Melih Gökçek
@06melihgokcek
Takip ediliyor

1 BBC İSTANBULDAKİ PATLAMA ALANINI EN NET GÖREN BİR BİNAYI KİRALAMIŞ... BBC 3-4 DAKİKA SONRA YAYINA BAŞLAMIŞ...

Saldırıyı bilen BBC canlı yayına hazırlanmış
İstanbul'da gerçekleştirilen saldırı sonrası, İngilizlerin yayın organı BBC patlama noktasını en net gören yerden yayına başladı.
turkiyehabermerkezi.com

02:31 - 13 Ara 2016

1.419 Retweet 1.582 Beğeni

created a suitable context for the spreading of the conspiracy theory that was put forward after the explosion.
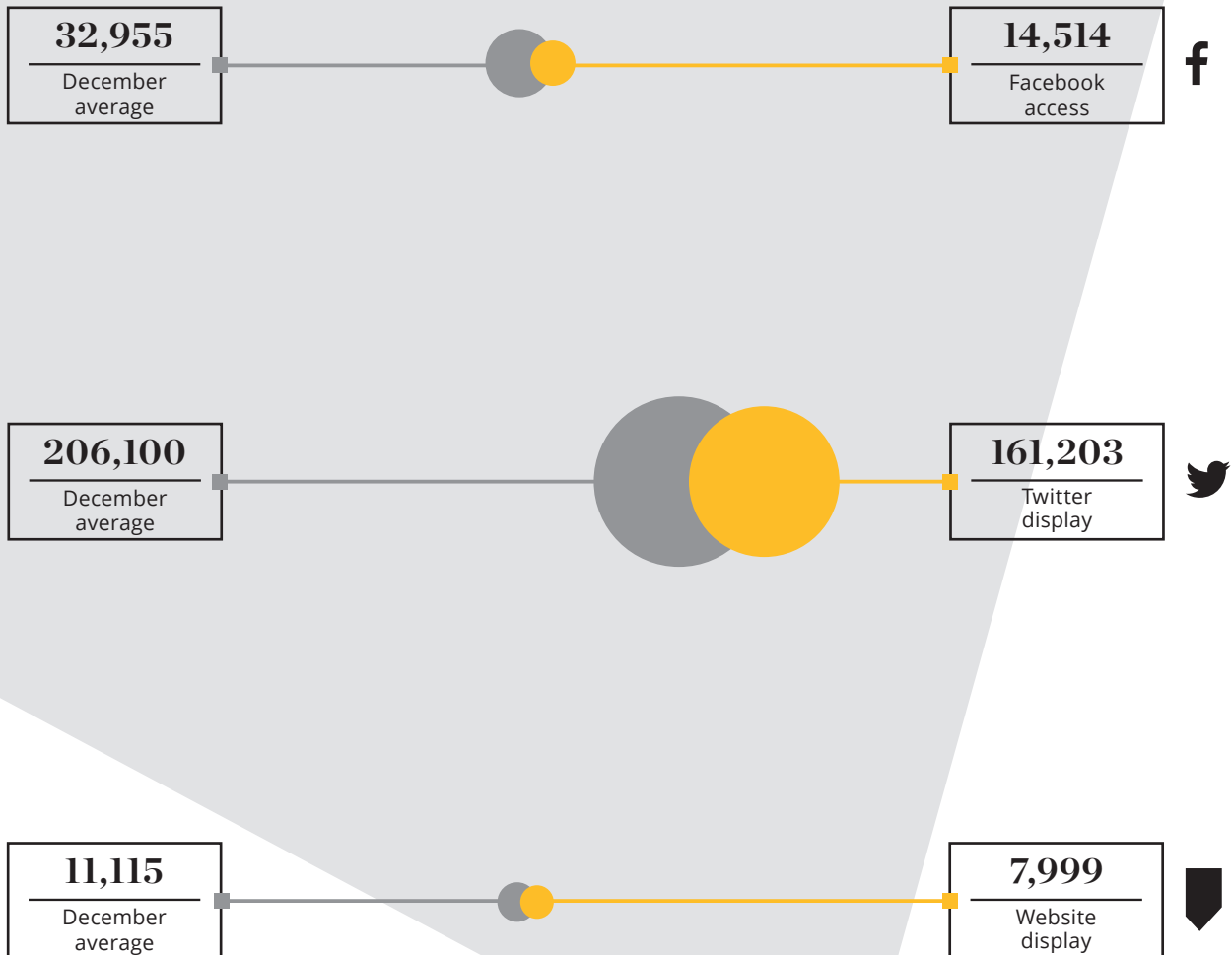
The misinformation about BBC's knowledge of the attack caused the threatening of the lives of BBC staff. Social media users who believed in this information stated that BBC had to stop broadcasting from Turkey and they kept insulting at the BBC reporter.

Teyit follow-up

The posts about this claim, including the ex-mayor of Ankara, Melih Gökçek's tweets, were not erased from social media. BBC Turkey's editor Murat Nişancıoğlu and BBC Turkey staff made explanations about the issue. The BBC personnel, who had provided teyit.org with the broadcasting stream of BBC, stated that he received a warning for this behavior.

Data: 14.12.2016 I Number of reports: 1

32,955
December average

14,514
Facebook access

f

206,100
December average

161,203
Twitter display

11,115
December average

7,999
Website display

Disclaimer / apology:
Melih Gökçek did not erase or correct his tweet. The news site named 'Türkiye Haber Merkezi', which had put forward the claim, did not remove the news or did not apoligize.
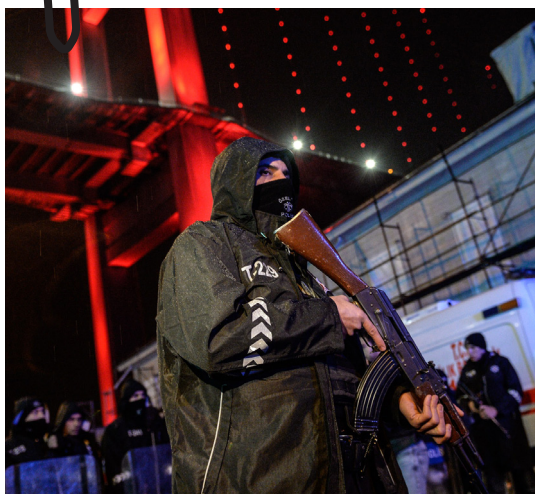
REINA

In the armed attack on Reina nightclub in Istanbul Ortaköy, which took place in early hours of 2017, 39 people lost their lives and 39 people got injured. Photos of the attacker, Abdulkadir Masharipov who was stated to be a member of ISIS, was published by the Security General Directorate one day after the attack and he was caught on January

17th. In the 17 days that had passed until Masharipov was caught, photos of three irrelevant persons waiting in passport queue and passport photo of a person went viral on the web and a person who also had no relation to the case, was exposed to lynching attempt in Istanbul, Pendik based on the claim that he resembled the attacker.

The facts that the attack was aimed at a lifestyle, the attacker couldn't be caught for a long time got combined with the claims that the attack was already known, yet no precautions were taken and this caused the uncontrollable spread of mistrust and fear in society. Together with the effect of the photos, which went viral on the web and media without being verified, the target deviated from the real actor to other people who had no relation to the case.

Inaccurate linking of innocent people with the Reina attack shows that; the difficulty in accessing reliable information in times of crisis, conflicting declarations of the officials and the mistrust stemming from uncertainty could easily lead to the pointing of the wrong people as the target.

Total number of reports about Reina attack:

65
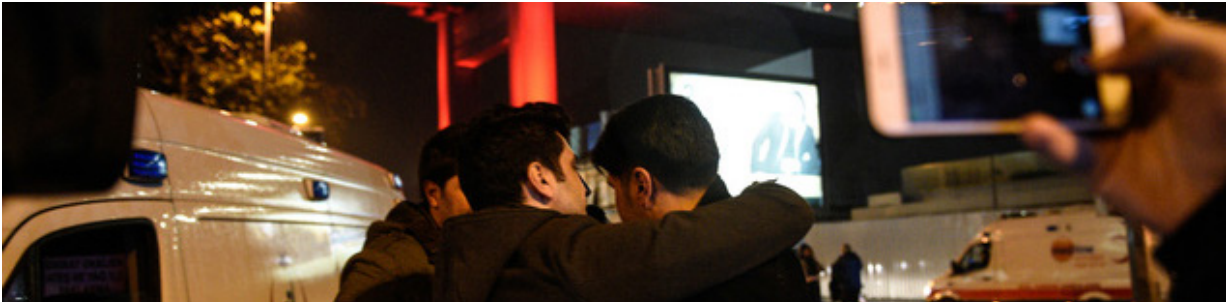
Persons whose photos taken at passport queue went viral

Kazakh citizen R.İ., a tradesman in Zeytinburnu, realized that a photo of him taken at 20:30 on 1 January 2017 while was waiting in the passport queue, was posted on social media with the statement "the photo of the Reina attacker".

The photo, which was taken during passport check by a surveillance camera at the checkpoint and which had to be in the hands of the security staff only, was first published by Superhaber.tv and went viral on the web in a short time.

R.İ. and his friends M.A. and N.S., photos of whom were taken while they were waiting in the passport queue and were posted on the web, had to go to Zeytinburnu Police Office to give their statement that they were not the attacker.

Fotoğrafını ilk kez SuperHaber yayınladı

O semtte alarm... Polis Reina teröristini Zeytinburnu'nda ev ev arıyor!

01.01.2017 20:22

When they posted their photos taken at the Police Office on Facebook, Superhaber.tv apologized and removed its news. On the other hand, photos of R.İ. kept going viral on the web until the Police Office provided the media with the photos of the real attacker.

Editors of teyit.org met the officials of Superhaber.tv while analyzing the claim and learned that the photos were obtained by a terror expert from security forces and were submitted to the owner of the website. So, the first loop of the chain of ignorance which caused the photos of innocent people to go viral on the web, was the security forces.
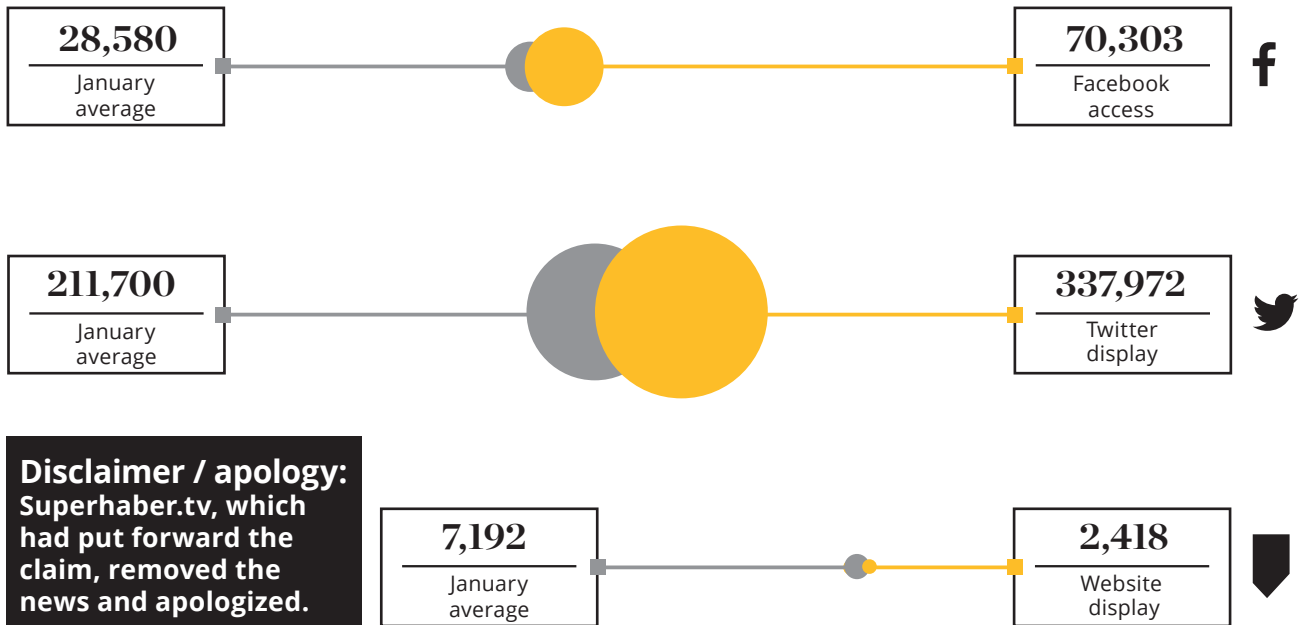
Teyit follow-up

There is still no information about the person or persons who had role in passing the photo to the media. There is no investigation about the officials who had negligent behavior in the photos' going viral. As far as known, the persons whom the photos belong to, still live in Zeytinburnu. Reina night club remained closed for a long time after the attack and it was destroyed in May 2017.

What was on the agenda?

The agenda of politics and society on 1 January 2017 was the attack on Reina nightclub. In the forthcoming days, there was a bazooka attack to the Police Office in Çınar District of Diyarbakır, Turkish and Russian jets shot ISIS targets and the Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım stated that "only Turkey struggled against ISIS".

Data: 01.01.2017 I Number of reports: 5

28,580 January average		70,303 Facebook access	f
211,700 January average		337,972 Twitter display	
7,192 January average		2,418 Website display	

Disclaimer / apology: Superhaber.tv, which had put forward the claim, removed the news and apologized.

The Kirghiz citizen whose passport photo was posted on the web

The mistrust environment created after Reina attack due to the failure of the capture of the attacker caused another person's being pointed as the target. In the posts which went viral on the web and in news sites such as TRT World, Cumhuriyet, Posta, Aydınlık, and Duvar, the attacker was claimed to have escaped to Kirghizstan. Actually, Kirghiz citizen

Lakhe Mashrapov's misfortune was that, two days after the attack, he traveled to Kirghizstan from Turkey, where he had come for trading, and his name was similar to that of the attacker. Mashrapov came to Turkey on 1 January 2017, which was the date of the attack. On January 3rd, while he was returning to Kirghizstan, he was questioned by the police in Istanbul and he was released. When Mashrapov returned to Kirghizstan, Kirghiz National Security teams came to his house. He was questioned again in Kirgizstan upon the posts on social media. In his statement,
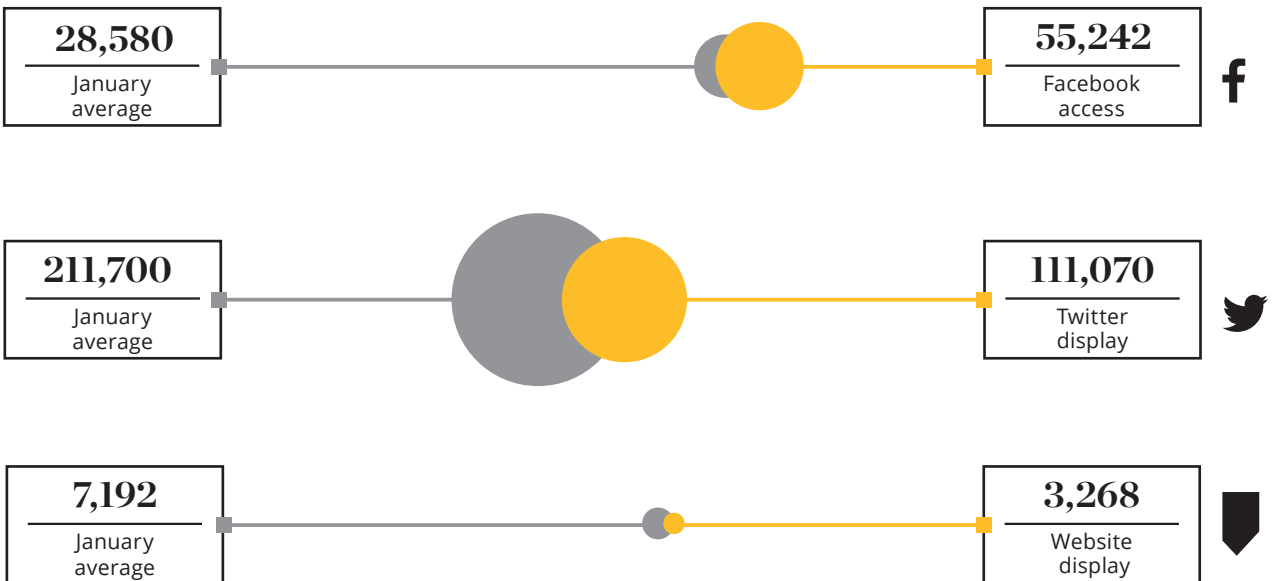
Mashrapov said that he had been visiting Istanbul since 2011 for his trading activities and that, he was in Kirghizstan on December 31st, when the attack took place and he provided the media with the images of the entrance and exit stamps on his passport.

Teyit follow-up

Mashrapov was released after his questioning in Kirghizstan. News sites which had written that Mashrapov was looked for or that the attacker had escaped to Kirghizstan changed their news contents but did not apologize. It's not known who took the photos which went viral on the web or how they were posted.

Data: 03.01.2017 I Number of reports: 5

28,580 January average	55,242 Facebook access	f
211,700 January average	111,070 Twitter display	
7,192 January average	3,268 Website display	

Disclaimer / apology:
Cumhuriyet ve Duvar news sites corrected their news. Whereas Posta did not remove the news from its website, Aydınlık did. No declaration or apology was published regarding the corrections.

WARNINGS FOR ATTACK

Since June 2015, over 500 people lost their lives in more than twenty attacks by ISIS and TAK (Kurdistan Freedom Hawks) terrorist organizations, which took place in metropolitan cities of Turkey including Ankara, Diyarbakır, Kayseri, Mardin, Bursa, İzmir, Bingöl and Gaziantep.

The attacks led Turkey to go into trauma and fear. Broadcast bans, insufficient transparency of judicial processes, ambiguous declarations of the authorities created an environment that facilitated misinformation to go viral.

The claims put forward in the last two years about the possibility of attacks, including the warnings of the US Embassy for its citizens living in Turkey, were among the most popular contents delivered to teyit.org through social media and messaging applications, including WhatsApp.

The citizens shared these warnings with the people around themselves in order to help each other and to get protected from the attacks. Although most of these warnings were inaccurate, with missing information or outdated, they kept going viral on the web as the relevant public and international organizations preserved their silence about the issues.

The warning message sent by the United Nations to its staff in Turkey

While there were many documents warning against attacks, circulating on social media, the warning message sent by the United Nations (UN) to its staff in Turkey in early December, could be verified only.

In this short message, the UN advised its staff to stay away from certain areas of Ankara between the dates 12-16 December 2016, as a terrorist attack could happen.

The UN staff posted the screenshot of this short-message as they were wishing to protect their beloved ones, thus the warning got spread.

Many UN staff, whom the editors of teyit.org interviewed to verify the message, stated that they had received the same message. The attitude of the UN Security Department toward teyit.org was rather interesting.

The officer, with whom the editors of teyit.org talked on the phone, verified this message and stated the following:

"We sent (the message) or not, I can't verify this to you. Do not call this number again. We are an international organization. So go call the police instead. We don't recognize you (teyit.org). We don't understand what you are trying to do (verification)."

Nothing happened on the date specified in the message. Within the framework of the intelligence information taken as basis by the UN, no declaration was made regarding whether any suspect was caught or not. The UN did not make any official declaration regarding the short message it had sent or the explanation it had made to teyit.org, but it was learned that, it warned its staff about the need to keep such kind of warning messages confidential.
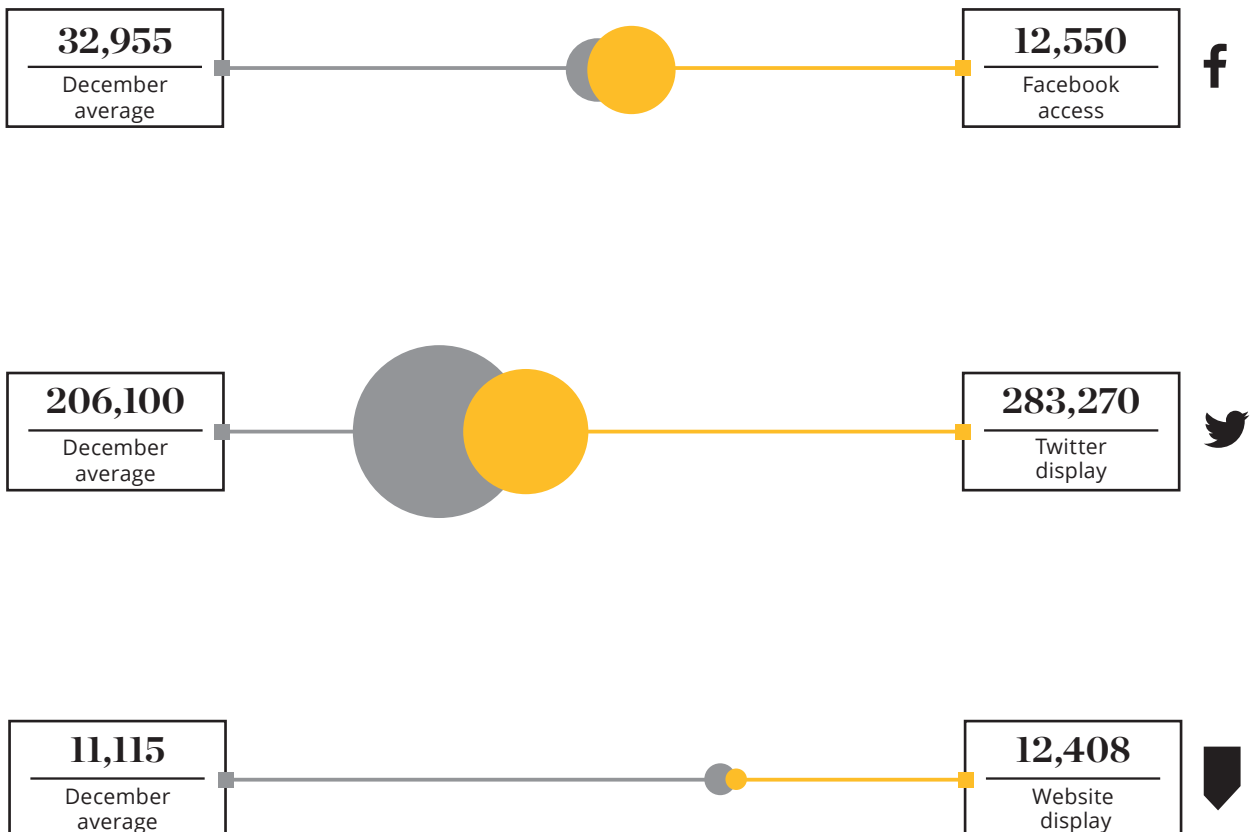
Total number of reports about warnings against attack:

111

What was on the agenda?

A day before the SMS of the UN went viral, i.e. on 10 December 2016, the attack organized by TAK (Kurdistan Freedom Hawks) took place in Beşiktaş. 48 people, 38 of whom were police, lost their lives in the attack. 235 people were taken into custody for a few days after the attack, with the claim that they praised the terrorist organization in their social media posts.

Data: 13.12.2016 I Number of reports: 15

| **32,955** December average | | **12,550** Facebook access | f |

| **206,100** December average | | **283,270** Twitter display | |

| **11,115** December average | | **12,408** Website display | |

The claim that bombs were placed at
19 different places in Istanbul

In January 2017, according to a text which particularly spread through WhatsApp messages, the French Consulate published a warning stating that bombs would be placed at 19 places in Istanbul. The message, which also included the names of these places, stated that Hülya Biren, the representative of Principality of Monaco, asked for the spreading of the message.

But in fact, neither the French Consulate nor Hülya Biren had anything to do with this message. The message appeared a short while after the coup attempt of July 15th and it went viral throughout the year 2016. As it reappeared in January 2017, the French Consulate published a declaration where they stated that they had not sent the message.

Hülya Biren, whose name was indicated in the message, also stated that she had no connection with the message and announced that she was going to file a lawsuit against the ones who had put this claim forward.

The message which showed up after the coup attempt and which reappeared 10 days after Reina attack demonstrated that times of doubt and anxiety create the best environment for the misinformation to settle.

Besides, when the organization related to the claim makes a declaration in a responsible manner and states that the message does not belong to it, indeed, rumors can be prevented as seen in this case.
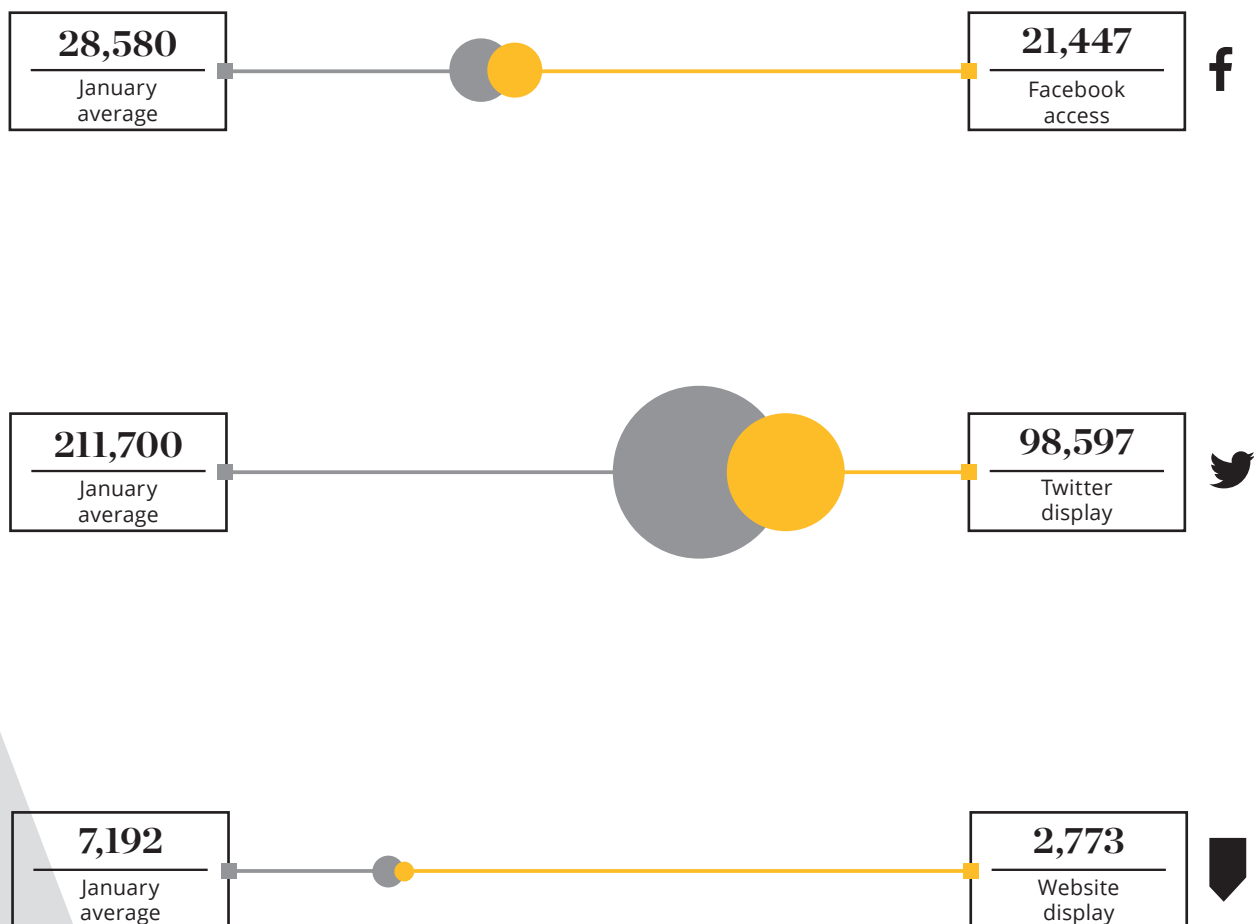
Teyit follow-up

There was no significant information about the message going viral following the declaration of the French Consulate and publishing of the analysis on teyit.org.

What was on the agenda?

At the time when the warning message claimed to be from the French Consulate went viral, Reina attacker was still outside and free. In the meanwhile, the clauses of the constitutional amendment were being voted in the Turkish Grand National Assembly.

Data: 11.01.2017 I Number of reports: 20

| **28,580** January average | | **21,447** Facebook access | f |

| **211,700** January average | | **98,597** Twitter display | |

| **7,192** January average | | **2,773** Website display | |

REFERENDUM

The constitutional amendment referendum for the implementation of the presidency model, which would change the government system in Turkey, deepened the already existing polarization in Turkey and divided the society into two groups as the 'Yes-Voters' and 'No-Voters'.

It could be said the whole referendum process was full of discussions and doubts beginning from the rumors about the

upcoming referendum to the decision of the YSK (Supreme Electoral Council) to accept votes without a seal as valid. Analyzing the matters discussed on the web about the referendum process, which are asked to be clarified, one could say that the discussions were mainly focused on the voting process of the change and the way the presidency system was defended rather than the contents of the presidency system.

These matters showed a great variety such as the shadiness of the referendum, how such shadiness would be uncovered, the interesting events observed during the "Yes" or "No" political campaigns, who were "Yes-voter" who were "Novoter" and the views of political actors they had stated about the presidency system in previous years.

One could get significant clues about the mechanism of democracy in Turkey considering the fact that not the contents of the presidency system but how people would use their votes during the referendum, how the seal should be put, until when the students could change their residence address for the determination of their voting place, whether faggot votes were used or not or whether the Syrians living in Turkey would be able to vote, were discussed.

Total number of reports about the referendum:

447

Photo: Güray Ervin

The claim that the vote would be deemed as invalid if the 'Choice' seal came on "No"

A week before the Referendum of 16 April 2017, a claim was posted on social media together with an image. According to that, if the 'Choice' seal came on "No" during the referendum voting, such vote would be deemed as invalid.

While one could remember from previous elections that the seal would be deemed as valid, regardless of the area it was put on the preferred choice, doubts and concerns about the possibility of the stealing of the votes on the web or the possibility that "Votes for 'No' would be deemed as invalid", this misinformation spread fast.

Organizations such as the YSK (Supreme Electoral Council) and Oy ve Ötesi (Vote and Beyond) declared that putting the seal on "No", would not make the vote become invalid, yet, it was not easy to prevent the misinformation from going viral.

The analysis where teyit.org stated the inaccuracy of this information became the top read article during the referendum process.

Teyit follow-up

With the declarations of the organizations and the analysis of teyit.org, accurate information was allowed to spread more than the misinformation. This claim was not observed again on April 16th. On the other hand, the decision of YSK (Supreme Electoral Council) to deem seal-free votes as valid, created doubt about the security of the election.

What was on the agenda?

When the claim was put forward, Turkey was getting prepared for the referendum. While the parties were carrying out their political campaigns, the presidency system was being discussed on the media.

Data: 09.04.2017 I Number of reports: 13

| 36,558 |
| January average |

| 287,916 |
| Facebook access |

f

| 224,300 |
| January average |

| 576,550 |
| Twitter display |

| 15,021 |
| January average |

| 172,399 |
| Website display |

The circular letter banishing the use of "Hayırlı" (meaning "good" but which also includes the word "No" in Turkish) in public institutions

While it was more than two months to go for the constitutional amendment referendum of April 16th, a claim was put forward on the web together with the photo of a circular banishing the use of phrases such as "Hayırlı cumalar" ("Happy Friday") "Hayırlı işler" ("Have a nice working day") "Hayırlı sabahlar" (Good morning") (all meaning "good" but they also include the word "No" in Turkish).

Although a similar claim was put forward in the referendum of 2010 and despite the many clues indicating that the document was forged, it went viral on the web for a long time. The reason behind such spreading of the claim can be users' reaction due to a simplistic belief that the claim could be true, as many improbable events had actually happened one after the other.

It could be said that the images of such kind of documents bearing numbers and figures to connote an official document always seem more persuading for the users on the web. Regardless of the possibility of the accuracy of the claim, the real-like view of the pattern creates a feeling that the content will be true, as well.
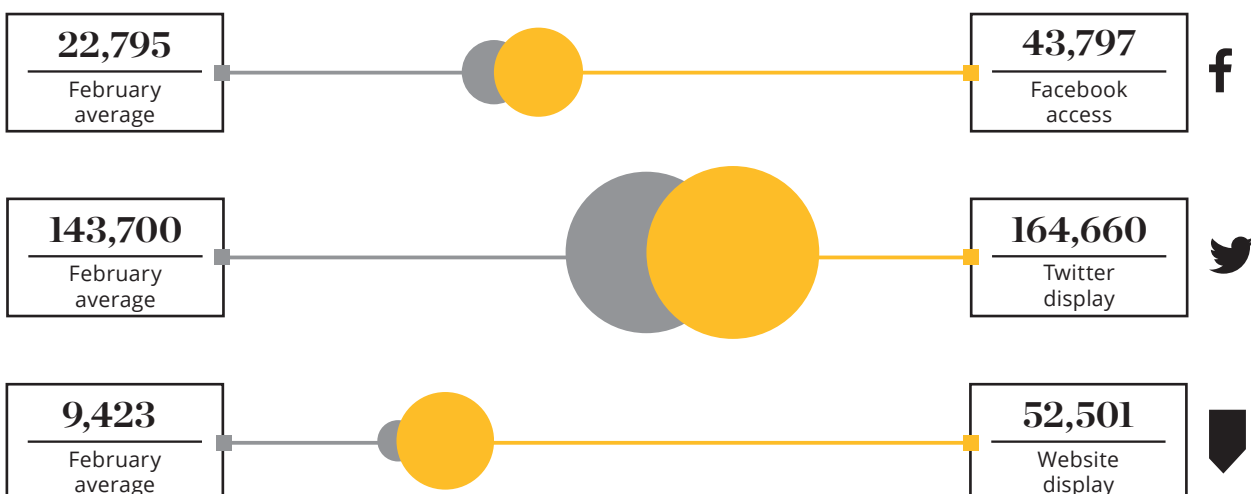
Teyit follow-up

Hours after teyit.org published an analysis stating the inaccuracy of the claim, the Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım made a declaration and said that the document was not real.

What was on the agenda?

The Wealth Fund was on the agenda on the days when the claim was spreading on social media. CHP (Republican People' Party) deputy Elif Türkmen was being criticized for her communication bill. Inflation and the increase in the special consumption tax were also on the agenda.

Data: 03.02.2017 I Number of reports: 52

22,795 February average		43,797 Facebook access	f
143,700 February average		164,660 Twitter display	🐦
9,423 February average		52,501 Website display	◢

SYRIANS

Refugees who came to Turkey after the civil war that came out in Syria in 2011, whose number has exceeded 3 million over time, were among the most significant topics of the traditional and social media last year. One of the key factors causing the Syrians living in Turkey to frequently come to the agenda was Turkey's external policy and its reflection on the internal policy.

The claim that Syrians would become citizens and benefit from health and education services unconditionally increased the already existing doubts and concerns about the refugees. As the process of the Syrians living in Turkey was not transparent enough in terms of economic and political policies, the way was opened for tensions which even led to violence.

Hate speeches and discriminative attitude toward the Syrians easily find a place on social media. Similarly, the negative representations in media organizations aggravated the problem. People had the notions that the Syrians who had left their country due to the ongoing war and came to Turkey for shelter were granted privileges by the state; the state preferred the Syrians instead of its own unemployed citizens; the Syrians got involved in criminal actions more (even though the data showed the contrary) and that; they caused a disturbance in social life.

The case experienced in Ankara Demetevler on July 4th was the most striking example of that. The claim that a Syrian raped a child in Demetevler went viral on social media, although it was not true, indeed and caused the neighborhood to pour into streets. The events in Demetevler came to an end with the intervention of the police and declaration of the governorate. Then, a person was taken into custody due to social media post.

Total number of reports about the Syrians:

280

One of the key factors that contributed to the spreading of misinformation about the Syrians, was the lack of sufficient flow of knowledge regarding the processes. Lack of clear declarations about how the fund received from the European Union was used, which kind of supports were from the State and which were from the United Nations, makes it difficult to prevent tension.

The queues in front of PTT (Post, Telegraph and Telephone) Offices and the claim that Syrians get salary

Social media posts from different cities together with various claims that Syrians were waiting in queues in front of PTT offices to get a salary, were among the most doubtful contents of the previous year.

Religious Doctor
@doktordin
Takip et

Sol tarafta PTT'de maaş bekleyen Suriyeliler....Sağ tarafta ise, 3-5 kuruş para kazanmak için sebze/meyve satan ülkemin vatandaşları...!

RETWEET 159
BEĞENİ 200

13:56 - 23 Şub 2017

3   159   200

In the posts which were sent with the belief that the Syrians had economical privilege, different figures were uttered regarding the salaries claimed to have been received and there was no information regarding the period for the salaries. Above all, it wasn't clear who gave these salaries. The posts mainly had the notion that Syrians were receiving grant from the state.

The reason behind the queues in front of the post offices was actually the winter support provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for the refugees in need. The UN had announced on its official website that 50,948 PTT cards were distributed and 254,740 people were reached. Via these PTT cards, the refugees were receiving winter support varying between 600 to 900 TRY.

The reason behind the queues in front of PTT offices was revealed out with the details obtained by the editors of teyit.org from AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency) and from Amnesty International. The UN did not cooperate regarding the support given to the Syrians or other claims and no further information about the limits of these supports was received.
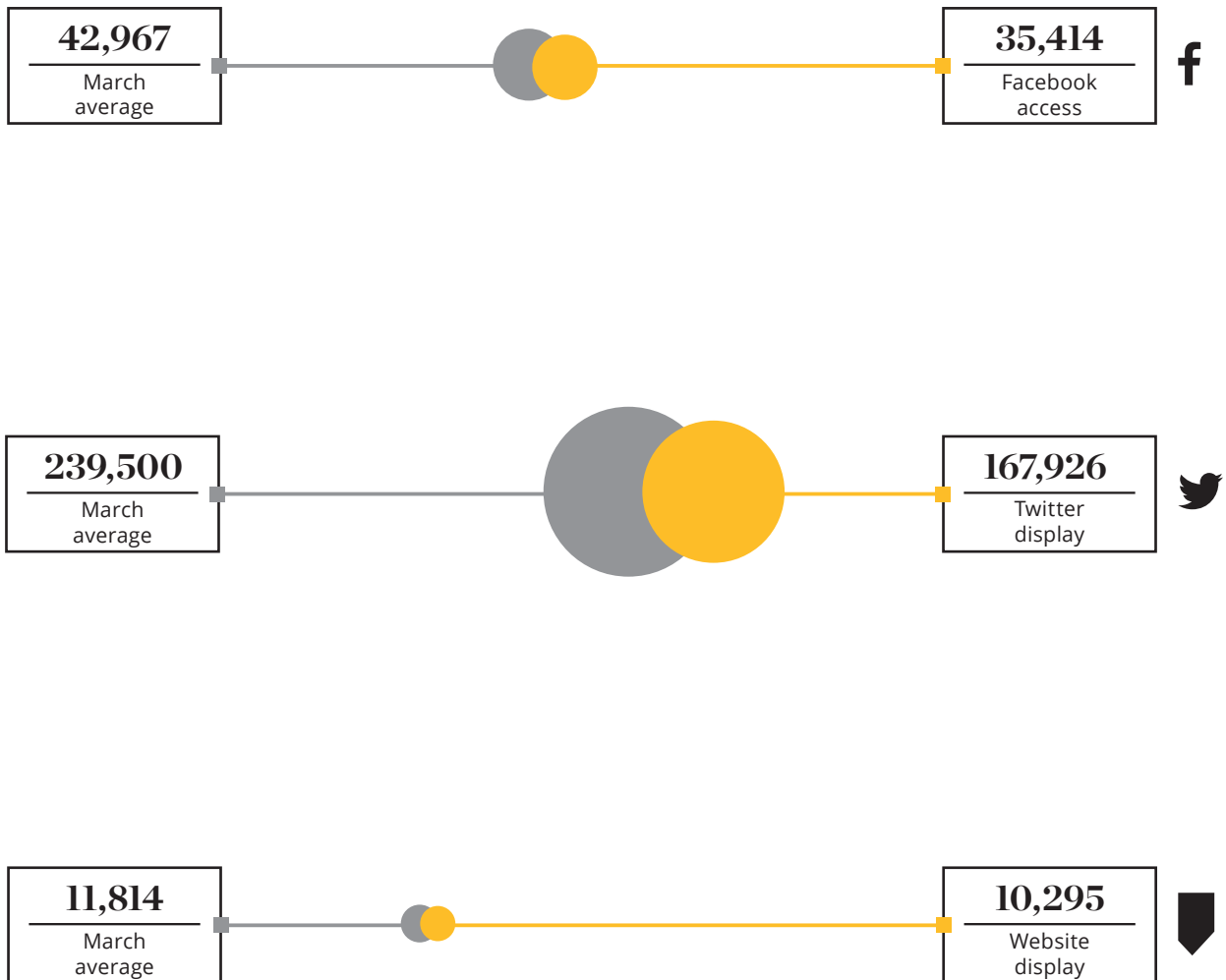
Teyit follow-up

The claims about the Syrians' receiving salary from the state are still on the agenda and are circulating on social media in various forms.

What was on the agenda?

Deputy Prime Minister Veysi Kaynak made a statement about the citizenship of 80,000 Syrians. Discussions about Syria started in Genova under the supervision of the UN. The Revenue Tax Law was accepted at the General Board of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The European Parliament Reporter of Turkey, Kati Piri announced that, if presidency system was applied following the referendum on April 16th, the membership process would be discussed again.

Data: 09.03.2017 I Number of reports: 10

| **42,967** March average | **35,414** Facebook access |

| **239,500** March average | **167,926** Twitter display |

| **11,814** March average | **10,295** Website display |

Disclaimer / apology:
**Balikligol.com, which was one of the sources that put forward the claims,
did not remove its news.**

The claim that two Syrians kidnapped and raped a woman in Bursa

In the posts shared on social media it was claimed that; in Bursa, two Syrians kidnapped Serpil Yıldırım, who was turning back home from work in the evening on 7 September 2017, and raped and killed her afterwards.

But the photos used in the posts actually belonged to another case which came out in 2013. The woman in the photo was Gülşan Sarcan, who was killed by her exhusband in Istanbul.

Editors of teyit.org called the Homicide Department of Bursa Provincial Directorate of Security and asked whether such event had happened or not. Statements of the officials also verified that no such event had taken place.

This claim is important in that it demonstrates the identification of ordinary crimes with the groups excluded from the society. According to the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the crime rate of the Syrians in Turkey is 1.32%. This data refutes the claim that the Syrians cause an increase in the number of criminal cases.

While the statistics show that the cases of harassment, rape and violence against women were already high long before the Syrians had come to Turkey, there still remains an inaccurate perception that the amount of such crimes has increased after the Syrians started to live in Turkey, or that, such crimes could only be committed by the Syrians

Teyit follow-up

The person claimed to have posted this on social media was taken into custody by Istanbul Provincial Directorate of Security. Legal action was taken against him for "overtly provoking the society into hatred and hostility" and he was released pending trial.

What was on the agenda?

President of the Republic, Recep Tayyip Tayyip Erdoğan's wife Emine Erdoğan and an accompanying committee went to Bangladesh to visit the Rohingya Muslims.
In the USA, a lawsuit was filed against the ex-Minister of Economy, Zafer Çağlayan.

Data: 09.09.2017 I Number of reports: 2

31,727 September average		**62,038** Facebook access	f
249,900 September average		**229,306** Twitter display	🐦
34,828 September average		**43,893** Website display	
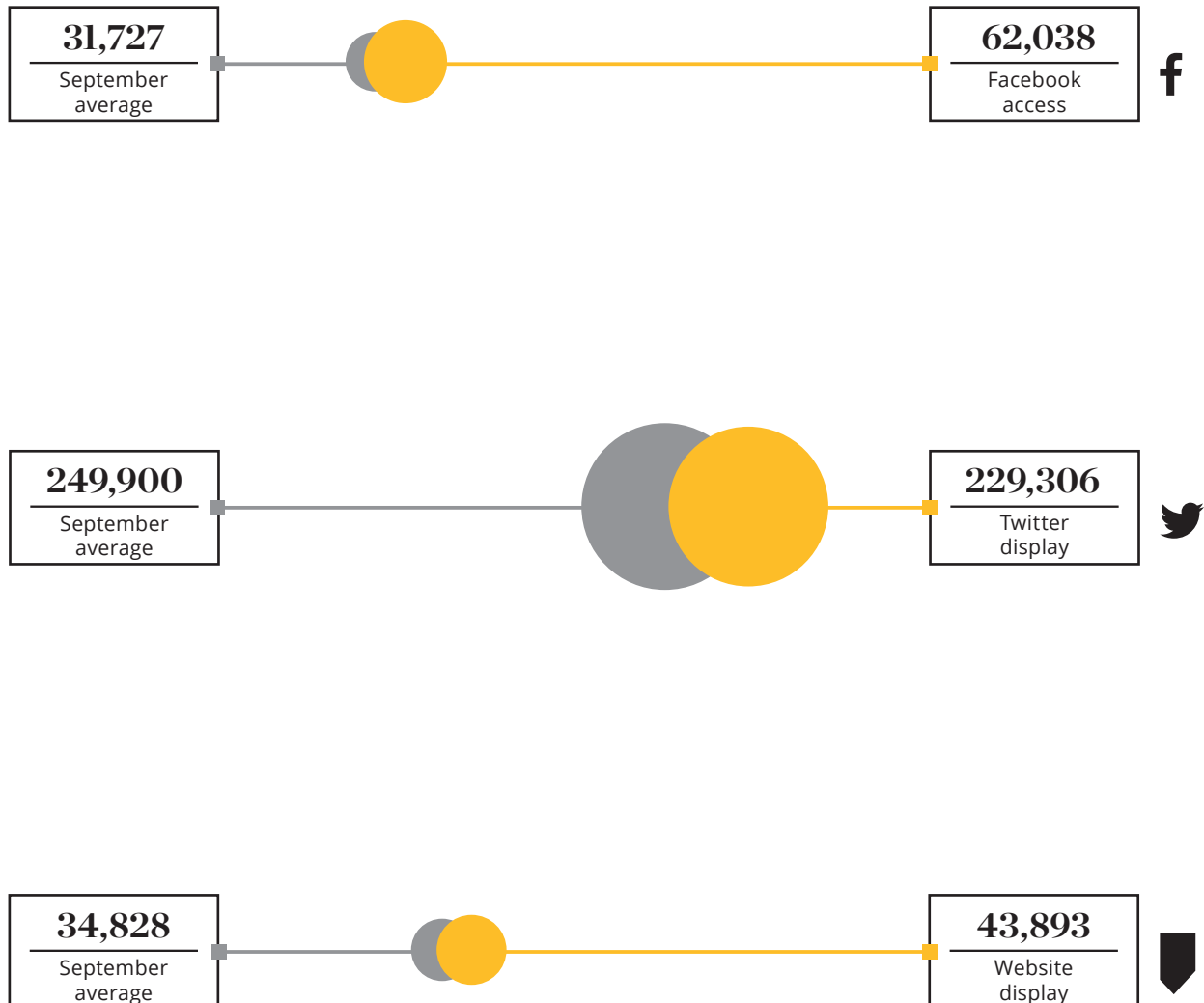
**Disclaimer / apology:
Facebook posts including this claim were removed.**

ECONOMY

The economy has a significant economic value for the people living in countries like Turkey, where economic fluctuations are faced and monetary policies change instantly. The basic factors aggravating economic concerns are that; hunger threshold for a family of four is 500 TRY, the minimum wage cannot go above a thousand and 404 TRY and the rate of unemployment is around 10%.

Consequently, social media users with economic concerns closely follow the economic news or economy-based claims. This takes attention of the bad-willed web users or the platforms wishing to spread the misinformation.

It is evident that the rates of inflation have always been significant and closely watched in Turkey. With the establishment of the Wealth Fund in February 2017, many state organizations were transferred to this fund, which meant a new issue for the agenda. The sudden increases in the dollar were also among the issues discussed the most the previous year.

For example, in a claim which was put forward on the agenda, it was stated that the prices of cigarettes would increase on 2 July 2017. The claim created a tremendous impression and was shared by the users. The claim, which went viral together with an image claiming to be showing the updated cigarette prices, is important in that it summarizes the state of users with economic concerns or sensitivities. As the frequency of the payment of taxes in Turkey increases every 6 months, the users pay more attention to such issues in certain months like January and June.

All in all, it can be easily observed that the claims put forward with economic concerns influence the users sooner. It could be stated to be leading to dragging of people into economic ambiguities, the emergence of anxieties such as impoverishment or misinformation such as the increase of taxes and quick spreading of such misinformation by the users who act with economic concerns.

Total number of reports in the category of economy:

276

The claim that an annual fee of 90 TRY would be paid for the new identity cards

With the start of the use of chip identity cards as of 2 January 2017, some inaccurate news and images spread on social media. The claim that an annual fee of 90 TRY would be paid for the new identity cards bearing a micro-chip, was among the most common of these claims.

But the claim, which was also expressed by news sites such as Milliyet and BirGün, was not true, indeed. This 90 TRY-fee was not for the new identity cards but for the electronic signature, which the individuals could define for their identity cards if they wished.

The frequent change of the identity cards, driver's licenses and passports create the concern for an "additional payment liability" among the citizens. As any change would mean extra costs, it can lead to the emergence of claims which may not be true at all times.
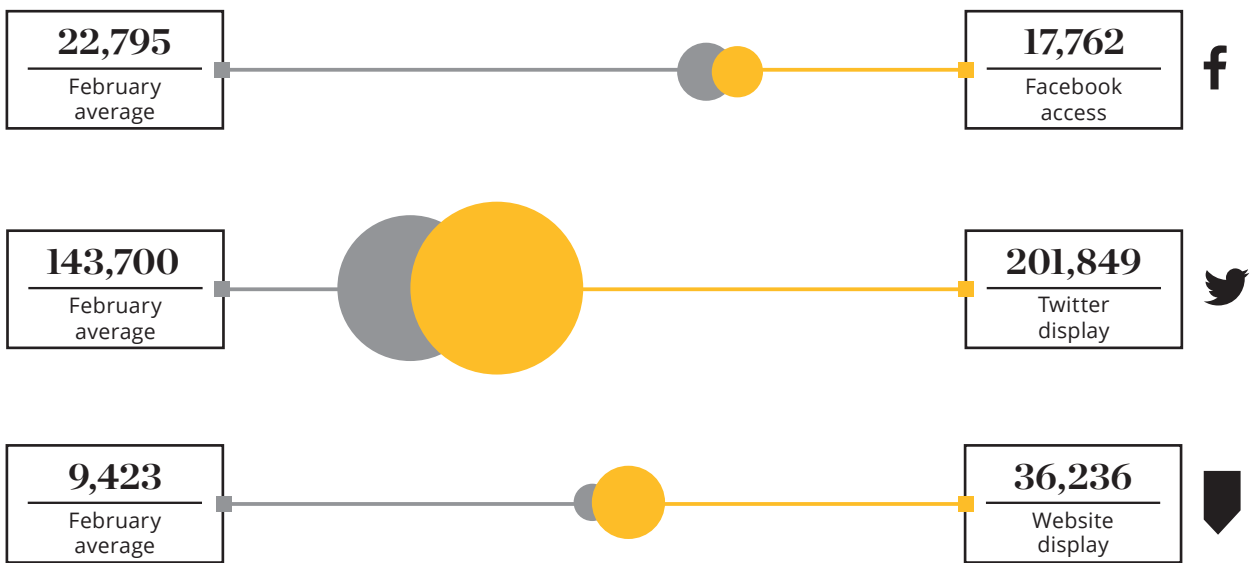
Teyit follow-up

After the denial of the claim that the annual fee for the new chip identity cards would be 90 TRY, another claim was put forward. According to that, these new chip identity cards would have to be obtained until the end of 2017. But this claim was not true, either. According to the statements of the officials, one can apply for the new identity card until 2020. The General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs announced on 22 September 2017 that 11 million individuals had obtained their new identity cards.

The agenda in Turkey

The agenda in Turkey in the first week of February were the recently established Wealth Fund, the regressing rate of Dollar, the regulation of the special consumption tax for white goods and the inflation rates of January. Furthermore; the statements of the USA President Trump about Iran, and a federal judge's abolishment of Trump's decision regarding the prohibition of USA visa for the citizens of certain countries.

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22,795 February average		**17,762** Facebook access
143,700 February average		**201,849** Twitter display
9,423 February average		**36,236** Website display

The claim that the Turkish Grand National Assembly accepted the law on the collection of a citizenship fee of 90 TRY

In a claim which was put forward in May 2017, it was stated that the Turkish Grand National Assembly accepted the law on the collection of a citizenship fee of 90 TRY. This claim was not new, indeed. It first appeared in Yeni Alanya newspaper on 3 July 2016.

It could be observed from the schedule of the Turkish Grand National Assembly that, there was no General Board meeting on 8 May 2017, as claimed. It could be seen from the records of the Assembly that the last General Board meeting took place on May 4 and neither in this meeting nor in previous meetings such a bill of law was discussed.

Although the claim already had clues about its inaccuracy, it becomes easier for the users to believe in such claims in an environment where political and economic ambiguities are prevailing and laws can easily be changed and enforced through statutory decrees due to the State of Emergency.

Furthermore; some previous experiences can be recalled when such claims are encountered. For example, on 29 November 2016, while the fire that broke out in a dormitory in Aladağ, Adana was on the agenda, the Turkish Grand National Assembly was voting for the raise of deputy salaries.

Teyit follow-up

Although the claim about the acceptance of the law on the collection of a citizenship fee of 90 TRY in Turkish Grand National Assembly was denied, Yeni Alanya newspaper did not remove the news from its website. It is still possible to find the denied claim on the web, although it's outdated.

What was on the agenda?

The agenda in Turkey in the first week of May were the request of aggravated life imprisonment for Reina attacker, Masharipov; discharge of Nursel Aydoğan from HDP (People's Democratic Party) deputyship; death of the singer İbrahim Erkal; the questionings of Süleyman Yeşilyurt and Hasan Akar by Bakırköy Office of Chief Public Prosecutor on the grounds that they insulted Atatürk in a TV program named 'Derin Tarih'.

Data: 09.05.2017 I Number of reports: 2

21,296 May average		18,632 Facebook access	f
149,400 May average		178,259 Twitter display	🐦
12,837 May average		96,523 Website display	
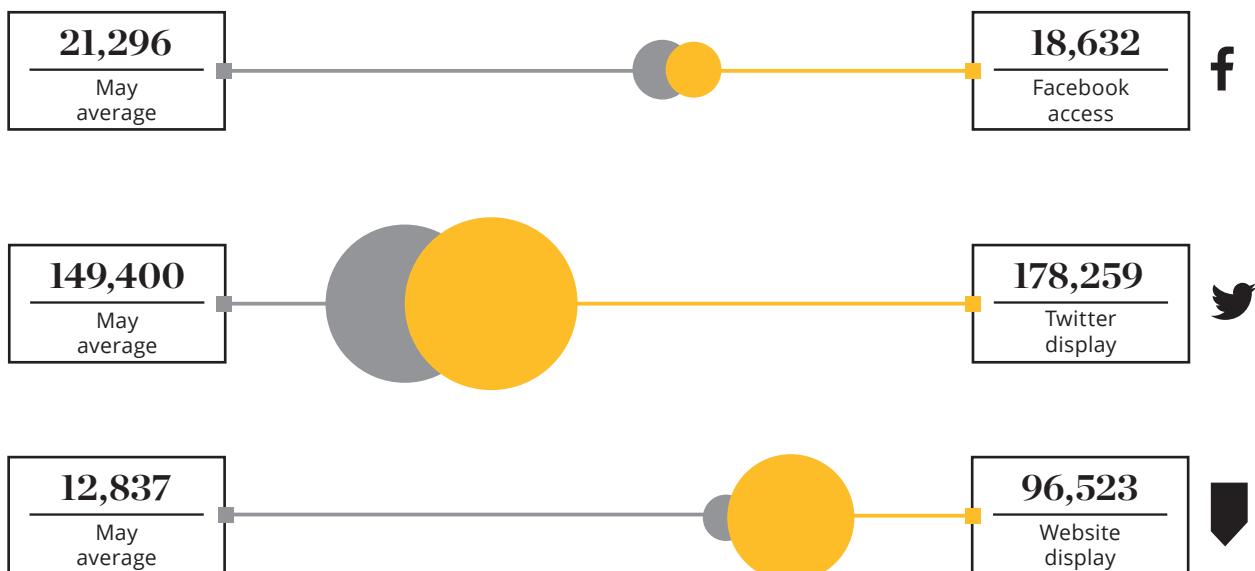
conclusion

When launching the broadcasting of teyit.org our assumption was that there would be a greater need for verified information during the times of crises, which was mostly verified with the data we have collected about the doubtful contents within the last year.

Particularly in times of crises, the number of doubtful contents sent to teyit.org for verification showed an increase much beyond the averages, which was an expected thing for us,indeed.

On the other hand, the number of published claims among all reports and doubtful contents was not high, as we are aware of our capacity and we try to put the claims into order according to their priority.

However; as certain information could not be obtained from public institutions, news sources did not tend to cooperate and due to lack of evidence, many claims were archived. We did not publish every "accurate news" within the framework of our publishing criteria which we have defined in order to prevent teyit.org from becoming a news site.

We are planning to increase the capacity of teyit.org in order to be able to analyze a greater amount of claims which the users doubt. We also would like to strengthen our relationships with the organizations defending the right of information and with the institutions giving efforts for media researches.

We are just at the beginning of the process to be able to understand the polarization and differentiation in Turkey and the reflections of those on the web users. As the amount of researches on media is rather low and most of those give the results in a distorted way due to the selection bias of the researcher or due to confirmation bias, there is theneed for more reliable researches.

While we know that the reports sent to teyit.org would not be sufficient to understand what the users doubt on the web, we believe that this first report of insight will indicate a more meaningful point when combined with the follow-up reports where we will focus on the understanding of the user behavior and the motivation behind the spreading of misinformation.

Moreover; by using the software we have developed, we aim to acquire knowledge about whether the analyses we have published spread on the web as the inaccurate news itself and whether they have been read by the users who have consumed such misinformation. As can be seen in the analyses dealt with in this report, while the relevant post may remain below

the average on social media, the website display can go much beyond the average with the support of Google searches. In order to assess the effect of teyit.org in the future, we will keep track of the information about the extent these displays overlap with the individuals who have encountered such inaccurate news.

The cases we have analyzed and shared here and their data show that politics, education, and environmental issue will be on our agenda in the following years, as well. We need to state that, more institutions should take actions in order to prevent the spreading of misinformation about the Syrians living in Turkey, or the environment of hostility created by disinformation can increase the number of conflicts.

Although we would never wish to go back to those days, we need to be prepared for potential crises, support media literacy of the users and keep reminding the institutions of their responsibilities.

With the insight reports to come after this report, we hope to reveal why the traditional media is not different than the social media with respect to the spreading of inaccurate news, how these two types of media feed each other, how the brands, states and international organizations, as well as the users, remain miserable against inaccurate news and conspiracy theories, why different echo-chambers cannot be permeable and we want to enlighten the psychological factors underlining this.

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Gatekeeper:

In communication science, it defines the initiative which audits the message of the source before it reaches the receiver and modifies it according to the conditions of the receiver. Famous people, politicians, journalists and trolls who have many followers on social media and the power to address to a certain echo-chamber are in this category for teyit.org.

Filter bubbles:

The concept of filter bubbles was put forward by Eli Pariser in 2011. It defines a state where the platforms know about user habits through certain algorithms and which allows the user to see only the contents they would like to see.

Backfire effect:

The concept of backfire effect was first used as a term by Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler. It indicates a cognitive bias where the individuals who have encountered an evidence to the contrary of their belief tend to reject this evidence and get more attached to their beliefs.

Post-truth:

The concept of post-truth came to the forefront following Brexit, the elections in Europe and Donald Trump's campaign for USA presidency and was selected as the word of 2016 by Oxford Dictionary. As an adjective, post-truth is defined as the 'state where objective realities are less influential than the feelings or personal opinions in determining the public opinion on a certain topic'.

Selection bias:

It means not taking random actions in determining the sample to analyze but to work with a certain sample to verify the assumption.

Confirmation bias:

It defines the state where the individuals selectively consider certain proofs and actual situations to support their opinions, beliefs or assumptions.

Echo-chamber:

Echo-chamber defines a reality where social media users' own opinions are echoed and where it is almost impossible to encounter different opinions. It is one of the concepts used in understanding the nature of web today.

refe
rences

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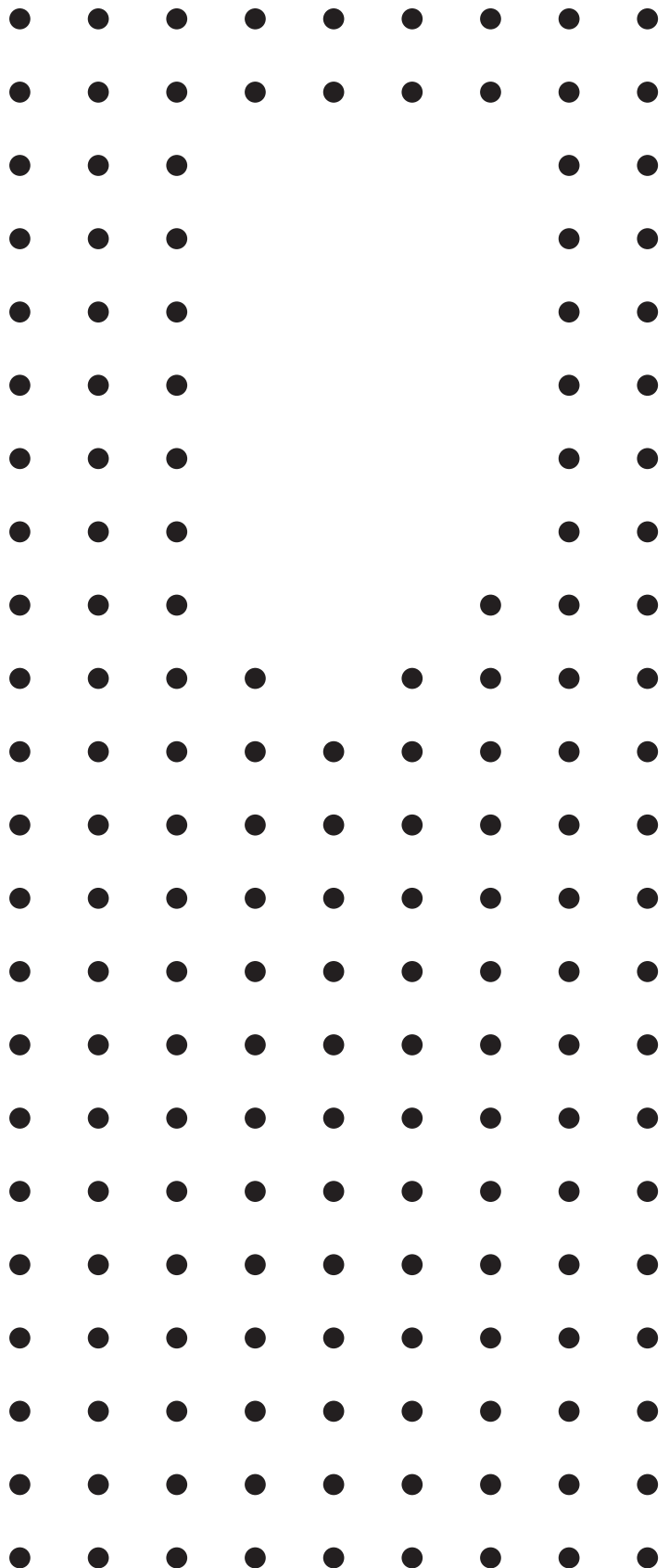**The claim that an annual fee of 90 TRY would be paid for the new identity cards**
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