

Rules of engagement for handling disinformation

2022 edition



**Rules of engagement for
handling disinformation** | **2022 edition**

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Background

In 2020, the Task Force on ESS strategic communication was launched, following the endorsement of its mandate at the meeting of the European Statistical System Committee in February 2020. The members of the Task Force are representatives of 17 National Statistical Institutes (NSIs)¹ and Eurostat. The aim of the Task Force has been to identify common challenges within the ESS and, where appropriate, to develop coordinated strategic communication approaches. The mandate of the Task Force expires in March 2022.

One of the three subgroups of the Task Force is the subgroup on handling disinformation, chaired by Statistics Netherlands. Its members are representatives from six NSIs (Belgium, Greece, Spain, France, Italy and the Netherlands) and Eurostat. The subgroup has prepared a set of 'rules of engagement', containing recommended practices on how to handle disinformation and a list of online tools that NSIs can use to detect, monitor and verify disinformation.

Eurostat, January 2022

¹ Statistics Belgium, Destatis, Statistics Denmark, the Hellenic Statistical Authority, INE Spain, INSEE, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Hungarian Central Statistical Office, the Central Statistics Office Ireland, ISTAT, Statistics Lithuania, Statistics Netherlands, Statistics Poland, INE Portugal, the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovakia, Statistics Finland Statistics. Austria was also a member of the Task Force from March 2020 until June 2021.

1. Introduction

1.1. Disinformation and the role of National Statistical Institutes (NSIs)

The digital revolution has brought us many good things. However, certain related phenomena, such as the rise of social media and changing information consumption habits, have together created an environment that enables the rapid proliferation of disinformation. This has rocked the foundations of many institutions underpinning democratic values and order in society. The European Commission (EC) initiated several activities in order to tackle disinformation. In 2018, the report '[A multi-dimensional approach to disinformation](#)', prepared by the independent High-level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation, was released. The report includes a number of recommendations aiming to provide short-term responses to the most pressing problems, longer-term responses to increase societal resilience to disinformation, and a framework for ensuring that the effectiveness of these responses is continuously evaluated. As EC Commissioner Mariya Gabriel wrote in her foreword, "there is no single lever to achieve these ambitions and eradicate disinformation from the media ecosystem." This is especially true for official statistics producers.

In an age of social media and 'filter bubbles', polarisation in the social debate, conspiracy theories and deliberate spreading of disinformation, an awareness of the benefits of the proper use of robust data in society is more important than ever. The Covid-19 crisis has made this all too clear.

We are seeing a disturbingly rapid increase in the amount of disinformation being promoted in the public sphere. The motivations of those behind this disinformation are not always clear. Since the role of official statistics is also to lay the foundation for a healthy public debate, National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) are affected by this increase in disinformation. Even worse, NSIs, as purveyors of objective facts, are targeted and affected by the dissemination of disinformation in public debate on an unprecedented scale. If not addressed, disinformation targeting NSIs can have a negative effect on their reputation, eroding trust and endangering their ability to fulfil their mission in society: providing organisations and individuals with high-quality statistics to support their decision-making.

This raises new questions for NSIs. What position should they assume? How can they handle this new phenomenon? What is considered to be disinformation (and what is not)? When does it become an issue for official statistics producers? What works in handling disinformation and what does not?

These questions were taken on by the subgroup of the Task Force on ESS strategic communication on handling disinformation (TF STRATCOM subgroup on handling disinformation), resulting in the answers outlined in this document.

1.2. Position of the Task Force on ESS strategic communication

Laying a foundation for public debate does not mean that NSIs should take an active and prominent part in that debate. The Task Force members agreed that NSIs should refrain from activities that can make them vulnerable to attacks and distract them from their core activity: producing and disseminating objective statistics in an independent way. The members of the Task Force agreed that the term ‘fake news’ could be provocative. As has been stated in the EC report ‘A multi-dimensional approach to disinformation’, the term ‘fake news’ has been appropriated and used misleadingly by powerful actors to dismiss coverage that they simply find disagreeable. The subgroup decided that its name should not reflect a provocative attitude and therefore ‘fake news’ and ‘fighting’ should be avoided. The group agreed on the proposed name ‘Subgroup on handling disinformation’ and on using the term ‘disinformation’ in all work and communication.

2. What is disinformation?

2.1. Definition with respect to the statistical domain

Disinformation is a phenomenon that goes well beyond the term ‘fake news’. On a general level, disinformation can touch every part of society, from politics, education, business, media to public debate, and can occur in many different formats. A shared definition for the purposes of the Task Force was necessary to take this work forward.

Disinformation as defined in the EC report mentioned above includes *all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for profit*. This definition was deemed too broad for NSIs, whose core activity is dissemination of objective facts and data. So the Task Force agreed that a common, more specific definition is important and is a meaningful starting point for its work, as a guideline for useful analysis and recommendations that can be applied in the world of official statistics.

In their first meeting, the members of the subgroup on handling disinformation discussed and agreed upon the following definition of disinformation:

‘Disinformation is non-factual or demonstrably untrue or wrong information that is spread in public debate. This information has the intent to mislead or is being presented as a “truth untold by mainstream media”.

The presented information can be contradicted with official statistics and facts provided by the statistical office.’

2.2. Two types of disinformation

In order to get a good grasp of the amount and types of disinformation that NSIs encounter, the members of the Task Force shared and analysed recent disinformation incidents which their organisations have faced. In the analyses of disinformation incidents collected by the members of the wider Task Force on ESS strategic communication, two main types of disinformation emerged: the first defined as ‘simple disinformation incidents’ and the second, ‘sophisticated disinformation incidents’, more threatening and more difficult to tackle. Simple incidents of disinformation are wrong/invented figures with the clear intention to mislead. As such, they are easy to counter, by simply stating the correct figure and providing referrals to the correct official data and documents.

The second type of disinformation is the type with which we struggle most. More complex disinformation includes, for example, data visualisations that do not use the right scale, visualisations that compare different time periods, incorrect calculations based on official NSI figures (with a clear mention of a statistical offices as a source, to give the data credibility).

In this document, we will try to distinguish between these two types of disinformation and propose appropriate response measures and recommendations.

‘Misinformation’ differs from disinformation since it is not spread with the intention to deceive or mislead – though in the end it might be doing just that. In general, misinformation is easier to counter by just correcting and giving accurate information.

3. How to identify, monitor and verify disinformation

The spread of disinformation has led to the development of a number of tools that aim to support individuals and organisations in monitoring and verifying disinformation spread online. A wide array of online platforms that cover disinformation and offer tools is available globally. In this document, we focus on platforms and tools that NSIs use or should consider using, given the experience others already have.

Two main groups of tools were identified by the Task Force as useful for NSIs when handling disinformation: online tools for tracking and monitoring disinformation and social media monitoring tools.

The tools in both groups can be adapted to the specific needs and area of work of the user, for example, an NSI in a given country, with specific topics that are vulnerable to the spread of disinformation.

Nevertheless, the Task Force noted that creating a monitoring system with a 100% coverage of all the arenas where disinformation might occur is unattainable. Human intervention and consideration, for instance, by NSI communications experts, is always needed to focus attention, evaluate and take the right course of action.

Monitoring official and 'mainstream' media, which are themselves targeted by disinformation attacks and are thus particularly alert, is another way to detect disinformation. During the Covid-19 crisis, many NSIs (also members of the Task Force) were prompted to consider action against disinformation in the field of statistics.

3.1. Online tools for tracking disinformation

There are different types of online tools for tracking disinformation: some of them analyse and visualise the spread of disinformation and allow for fact-checking (e.g. Hoaxy), others allow users to browse and search for fact-checks in relation to, for example, a specific topic or a politician's statement (e.g. Google Fact Check Explorer).

A full list of tools identified by TF STRATCOM subgroup on handling disinformation for the monitoring and verification of disinformation is available in the Annex.

3.2. Social media monitoring tools

While social media monitoring tools have a broader application in the management of social media and online communities, they can also be valuable for the timely detection of disinformation. Social media monitoring tools allow organisations such as NSIs to track mentions of any given term or topic (name of the organisation, statistical release, etc.) based on predefined keywords and algorithms on online platforms such as media outlets, social media and blogs. By tracking online mentions of specific terms in relation to their organisations, NSIs can monitor conversations that develop online around their content, identify misinformation and disinformation and react, when necessary, in a timely manner. These tools can also help NSIs identify supporters who have influence in their online communities and with whom they could engage to seek support.

A full list of social media monitoring tools identified by TF STRATCOM subgroup on handling disinformation for the monitoring and verification of disinformation is available in the Annex.

The choice and use of social media monitoring tools should be decided in collaboration with local data protection officers. Some social media monitoring tools may be evaluated as not being in line with the [General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679](#) (GDPR) due to the amount or type of the personal data they collect or the location of their servers (US).

4. Incidents: what is actually happening in the ESS

In most Member States, NSIs have recently been confronted with disinformation incidents that affected their communication or reputation. Members of the Task Force shared these incidents with each other, to learn from them and develop effective measures. The incidents are saved in an online repository that is regularly updated and available.

The repository includes information on the topic of the incident, description, date, source/media concerned, and, if applicable, engagement actions and results.

Incidents in the recent past were often linked to the Covid-19 crisis, like disinformation spread on the severity of the crisis and persons challenging official mortality statistics published by NSIs. Among Task Force members, this type of disinformation was detected by NSIs in Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium and Ireland. Labour and unemployment data in Greece and Poland were challenged in disinformation claims. In Spain, Ireland and the Netherlands disinformation was spread about NSI research regarding the use of mobile network operators' data, claiming that citizens were illegally tracked.

5. Tried and tested response practices

In addition to sharing and analysing disinformation incidents, members of the Task Force also gathered information on their response practices and their impact. Many NSIs took specific actions: some worked well, some were less effective or not at all effective, and others even backfired. The following sections provide a summary of responses that did not work or were counterproductive, followed by a more extensive list of responses that worked and were effective.

5.1. Lessons from NSIs' incidents

WHAT DID NOT WORK

- Engaging directly with the spreaders of disinformation, e.g. on social media in not-owned communities.

This exposes the NSI as 'the voice of the establishment', member of conspiracy; makes it vulnerable to counterattacks like accusations of 'fake news' and provokes even more attacks.

- In a message shared by the NSI (e.g. a tweet) directed toward the propagator of disinformation, repeating the disinformation content ('the myth') and naming it as such, before providing the right information and correct data.

This might be deliberately misused as a confirmation of the disinformation provided, reduce the power of objective facts and the effectiveness of argumentation and positions the NSI as the voice of 'the establishment'.

WHAT WORKED

- Use of *disinformation* detection tools (e.g. social media monitoring tools)
- Having an *analysis* and response plan/strategy in place
- Responding immediately (though not in direct debate/contact with the spreaders), preferably on your own channels and with neutral messages, focusing on the accurate *information* and data.
- Responding via partners/ambassadors in your network as authoritative voices that articulate the position of official statistics, preferably in their independent channels (so called 'earned' channels or media).
- Use of alert *verification* / fact-checking platforms
- Dissemination of results of investigations on disinformation by media/fact-checkers on NSI *website*
- Proactive communication of the values and the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice that characterise the work of ESS partners (our values and the principles of the Code of Practice determine how we work and differentiate us from other entities *that* disseminate data)
- Foster two-way communication on websites and social media: NSIs and Eurostat could benefit from two-way communication on social media and other digital platforms. Encouraging people to ask questions or express their concerns makes it

easier to provide valid responses, avoid the spread of disinformation, and gain and maintain trust.

- Empower employees to act as ambassadors: Choose spokespersons or experts who can speak on behalf of the NSI for different areas of statistics (e.g. one for health statistics, one for population and housing census). These spokespersons should be experienced, long-time employees who are well aware of the methodology and objectives of the surveys and are monitoring all relevant public discussions concerning their field.
- Build partnerships to handle disinformation: Partnering with (trusted) organisations, personalities, experts or social media influencers for information-sharing (when similar information is sent from multiple sources, this information has higher chances of being seen and trusted). Engage with influencers on social media, especially to reach young people (see the [learning corner on how to spot and fight disinformation](#) prepared by the Directorate-General for Communication of the European Commission, especially [the guidelines for teachers](#))
- Build partnerships to educate the public: Promote statistics as well as media and information literacy (of users and journalists) to fight disinformation and help users by providing valid official statistics while navigating the digital media environment.
 - Educate people on critical assessment of data they see online, ensuring that people know as much as possible about existing disinformation before it appears on their social media feeds.
- Train local professional news outlets in best practices for searching for official *statistics*.
- Encourage journalists to build trust by providing readers with background information to their stories. This can include information on why they are writing the story, how the story was reported, which steps were taken to be fair with the reporting and how they found the reported data.

5.2. Lessons from the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Communication

The Task Force members also consulted specialists from the Directorate-General for Communication of the European Commission who are involved with the European Commission programme on tackling disinformation. They presented a number of recommendations and showed the results of specific actions they carried out.

Some of their recommendations include:

- **Improve detection, analysis and exposure of disinformation**
Invest in digital tools, data analysis skills and specialised staff within the EU institutions and in Member States; assess reach and impact of disinformation.
- **Create stronger cooperation and joint responses to disinformation among Member States and with organisations**
- **Raise awareness and improve societal resilience.**

The European Commission put in place the following mechanisms:

- The Rapid Alert System provides alerts on disinformation campaigns in real time to national contact points for disinformation designated by Member States and allows for an exchange of identified disinformation incidents before they appear elsewhere.
- Implementation of EU-wide Code of Practice on Disinformation: Major online companies such as Google, Facebook, Twitter and Mozilla have signed up; regular reporting as of January 2019 and possible regulatory action in case of unsatisfactory results.
- Targeted campaigns in Europe and beyond: Active participation of civil society in identifying and exposing disinformation; supporting independent media and fact-checkers.
- Mobilisation of the private sector to tackle disinformation; partnering with social media providers (Facebook, Twitter) to implement fact-checking on their platforms.

6. Rules of engagement for the ESS

NSIs are advised to develop and maintain a prudent and consistent approach to handling disinformation incidents. Consistently adhering to a set of predesigned rules in an engagement strategy protects against careless actions that may backfire. NSIs are advised to refrain from getting involved directly in public debate and from direct confrontation with propagators of disinformation in public (online) spaces or media where disinformation is being spread. This makes an NSI vulnerable to allegations such as bias and partisanship, lack of objectivity and independence. Getting involved in the debate always means that, one way or another (left or right), the public institution will be accused of taking a side. But that does not mean doing nothing is the only alternative.

The following sections present the ‘rules of engagement’ for NSIs, developed by the subgroup as a guideline for actions to take when confronted with disinformation. A distinction is made between actions useful for tackling simple, and sophisticated, disinformation incidents.

6.1. Do research

- Ensure you fully understand the topic of disinformation.
- Identify and check the original source of disinformation.
- Check the authenticity of the social media account of the propagator - engage only on 'safe platforms' with verified accounts and trusted accounts.

6.2. Response

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- After your initial research, decide whether to respond or not. Not every incident needs to be addressed actively. Some are too small, insignificant, or appear in obscure channels with low exposure and can be ignored. Sometimes incidents 'die out'. But do not ignore disinformation incidents that have clear potential to become more substantial: if the disinformation starts spreading fast, has the potential to damage your organisation's reputation or can have a significant negative impact on society.
- Refrain as much as possible from direct engagement with propagators of disinformation (identified as such). In general, do not engage directly in discussion with (anonymous or fake) accounts that spread disinformation.
- In the event of a barrage of negative attacks, it is wise to wait and pick your battles. Do not distance yourself openly from the narrative framework of the accuser but carefully plan the next steps (e.g. after an initial response) by designing credible, well-documented responses.
- Keep disseminating the right data, indicators, explanations and comments within trusted channels and owned media. Make sure your audience is not surprised by sudden new channels, platforms or content used by the NSI (thus raising new questions).
- Turn the argument around by making strong points based on statistical data, giving extra information, metadata, etc.
- Keep it simple and use plain language, keeping in mind that among your audience there might be people who do not have a high degree of statistical literacy or who might not spend too much time reading your message.

If you decide it is necessary to respond to a disinformation incident, as a first step, we advise determining whether you are dealing with simple or sophisticated disinformation, as defined in section 2.2 of this document. Once you have done that, you can choose the right course of action as recommended below.

SIMPLE DISINFORMATION

- When disinformation is explicitly wrong, for example, a wrong figure that is plainly contrary to official statistics/indicators: check with the relevant statisticians in your organisation and release a statement on your preferred channel containing the correct data/indicator. Do not mention directly the disinformation message/name of the spreader when it is not necessary.
- Respond by sharing a link to the relevant official figures, for example, the open database or a graph or visualisation.

SOPHISTICATED DISINFORMATION

- Ask your strategic partners with authoritative voices/experts to respond with the correct message/data, referring to your own message, if any. Identify and engage with partners at a national level using the repository maintained by the European Digital Media Observatory: <https://edmo.eu/fact-checking-activities/>.
- Use proactive, positive communication. When drafting a response, be straightforward and succinct. Avoid emphasising disinformation when countering false claims (explaining why disinformation is incorrect is more effective than simply labelling it as false).
 - *When choosing to respond, it is important to determine at the same time the extent to which you will continue to respond to someone's false or misleading argument. It is crucial to 'pick your battles' and set a cut-off point for making further counter claims. A lot of news is likely to die out in the news cycle and there is no need to take more actions to counter it.*
- Tailor information/response to the users' specific needs and preferred channels of media consumption (as media consumption habits differ significantly across the different audiences). Aim to use a variety of media (video, infographics, etc.) to get the response message out and reach all users (whose age, habits and knowledge differ).
- Optional (depending on the NSI's general strategy for senior management social media engagement): respond using the account of a high-ranking officer in the organisation (director or director-general) to give your message an authoritative tone and a personal touch.

6.3. Recommendations from ‘The Debunking Handbook’

This widely cited handbook on disinformation and how to tackle it can be useful material for NSIs as well. The *Debunking Handbook 2020*² summarises the current state of the science of misinformation and its demystification. It was written by a team of 22 prominent scholars of disinformation and represents the current consensus on the science of disinformation exposure for engaged citizens, policymakers, journalists, and other practitioners. A step-by-step guide to addressing disinformation, based on the *Debunking Handbook*, is provided below.

1. FACTS: Tell the truth first

Do it easily and in a few words. This allows to configure the message and direct the conversation by relying on your own points, not those of others.

An alternative based on official statistics must be given to make it easier to ‘erase’ inaccurate information in the initial understanding of the person and replace it with the facts.

2. MYTH: Point out disinformation

Repeat it only once and immediately before correcting it. Avoid unnecessary repetitions that can give credibility to disinformation.

3. FALLACY: Explain why disinformation is wrong

Juxtapose the correction with the disinformation. Ensure the differences are clear even on a quick read.

- a) Explain why the disinformation seemed correct in the first place
- b) Why it is now clear that it is wrong
- c) Why the alternative is correct

4. FACTS: State the truth and facts again

Make sure the truth is the last thing people will process. Realise the effects will fade over time, so be prepared to debunk it repeatedly.

² George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication (2020). [Debunking Handbook 2020](#). Fairfax: George Mason University.

6.4. Latest experiences

In putting the recommendations mentioned above into practice, some NSIs have already learned some interesting lessons.

According to Statistics Netherlands, at the time of writing, there was a notable decrease in the spread of disinformation on Covid-19 related topics, such as doubts around the trustworthiness of official statistics on excess mortality. Especially in mainstream media, there is less debate on these figures. Disinformation incidents seem to be limited to small, isolated communities, mostly active on social media, and do not appear as much in mainstream media and at the heart of the public debate. The highest number of disinformation incidents appears in the debate on vaccination and its health implications – a topic not covered by official statistics.

However, it is not possible to determine the exact cause of this development and to assign this decrease to actions carried out by Statistics Netherlands. On the other hand, the situation is different when it comes to the climate change debate.

ISTAT observed a similar development and noted that citizens increasingly recognise and point out disinformation in the discussions on Covid-19.

Statistics Belgium noticed a positive evolution in the use of its statistics since the start of the Covid-19 crisis. Especially on Twitter, users react to disinformation and tag Statistics Belgium when posting the correct figures. Users even use Statistics Belgium figures to correct news reports containing erratic data.

Statistics Belgium underlined the importance of the recommendation to keep disseminating the right data, indicators, explanations and comments within trusted channels and owned media. They have also found it beneficial to refrain from direct engagement with spreaders of disinformation. These two principles will be incorporated in its general communication strategy. Besides this, Statistics Belgium is aiming for better collaboration with the academic and educational world in order to enhance the statistical literacy of specific user groups.

7. Conclusion

The growing number of disinformation incidents affecting official statistics has underlined the vulnerability of the role of NSIs in public debate. This became all the more evident during the Covid-19 crisis, when many NSIs faced disinformation incidents through which the accuracy, objectivity and independence of their statistics were questioned publicly. Therefore, NSIs are advised to develop an appropriate response plan, taking into consideration the general recommendation of avoiding direct confrontation with the propagators of disinformation.

There are many tools available, mainly online, that can help NSIs to identify and monitor disinformation spread on online platforms and the Task Force encourages their use. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that tools are not enough to develop and implement the right response. Since NSIs have a delicate position as independent public bodies within the governmental structure, constant evaluation of incidents and tailoring of responses is needed. NSIs are advised to ensure that staff in the relevant departments (most often communications departments) are adequate in number and equipped with the right skills and procedures to handle and respond to disinformation. Supporting such activities in NSIs can include engaging dedicated staff; systematising internal support from other departments, like statistical research and production; enhancing collaboration between statistical and communication professionals on the work needed to handle disinformation; and fostering collaboration and exchange on the topic in the ESS and with external actors (other governmental bodies, fact-checking organisations and journalists).

In the framework of the discussion on the continuation of the work on strategic communication in the ESS after the expiration of the Task Force's mandate, the subgroup recommends to continue the work on disinformation in the form of exchange of experiences, updating the repository of disinformation incidents and further developing recommendations. At the European level, there are several ongoing initiatives around handling and fighting disinformation. The Directorate-General for Communication of the European Commission is running the Network against Disinformation as well as topical groups (data, climate change). In this context, another action could be connecting the work on disinformation in the ESS with the work of the European Commission. Since membership in these groups is not open to organisations outside of the European Commission, a link could be established through Eurostat.

Annex: Online tools for identifying, monitoring and verifying disinformation

Tracking and analysing disinformation online					
Name	Owner	Platforms checked	URL	Description	Languages
Google Fact Check Explorer	Google	All	Link^a	Aims to facilitate the work of fact-checkers, journalists and researchers. Allows you to easily browse and search for fact-checks. For example, you can search for a politician's statement, or for a topic. You can also restrict results to a specific publisher. Using the tool allows you to consult fact-checkers around the world to see if they have written about a certain image, claim, or content.	All languages
Global disinformation index	Veracity.ai	News outlets	Link^b	The Global Disinformation Index is a web-based tool that rates news outlets based on the "probability of disinformation on a specific media outlet." This rating system covers all types of media, and provides a real-time score.	English
Hoaxy	Indiana University Bloomington	Twitter, online articles	Link^c	Visualises the spread of claims; fact-checking; A platform for tracking online misinformation. It is an open platform for the automatic tracking of both online fake news and fact-checking on social media. The goal of the platform is to reconstruct the diffusion networks induced by hoaxes and their corrections as they are shared online and spread from person to person. Hoaxy allows researchers, journalists, and the general public to study the factors that affect the success and mitigation of massive digital misinformation.	Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, Chinese, English, Farsi, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Malay, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish
BotSlayer	Indiana University Bloomington	Twitter	Link^d	An application that helps track and detect potential manipulation of information spreading on Twitter; uses an anomaly detection algorithm to flag hashtags, links, accounts, and media that are trending and amplified in a coordinated fashion by likely bots. It lets users explore the tweets and accounts associated with suspicious campaigns via Twitter, visualise their spread via Hoaxy, and search related images and content on Google. BotSlayer can be used by journalists, corporations, and political candidates to discover in real time new coordinated campaigns in their domains of interest, without any prior knowledge of these campaigns.	English
Botometer	Indiana University Bloomington	Twitter	Link^e	Botometer is a tool to detect and remove likely social bots from your list of Twitter followers or friends; checks the activity of a Twitter account and gives it a score.	All languages

Tracking and analysing disinformation online					
Twitter twXplorer	Northwestern University	Twitter	Link^f	Social media research tool; TwXplorer allows users to search for a word or phrase and automatically see the most commonly used words and hashtags and the mostly frequently shared links; designed as a tool for researchers and journalists.	English
Iffy Quotient	Michigan University	news and information sites	Link^g	The Iffy Quotient is a metric for how much content from sites that frequently publish misinformation ('iffy') has been amplified on Facebook and Twitter.	English
CrowdTangle	Facebook	Facebook, Instagram and Reddit	Link^h	A tool that publishers use to track how content spreads around the web; allows users to follow, analyse, and report on what's happening with public content on social media; allows users to follow public content across Facebook, Instagram and Reddit, to benchmark and compare performance of public accounts over time, and track referrals and find larger trends to understand how public content spreads on social media.	All languages

Factchecking and investigative journalism					
Name	Owner	Platforms checked	URL	Description	Languages
Google Fact Check Explorer	Google	All	Linkⁱ	Aims to facilitate the work of fact-checkers, journalists and researchers. Allows you to easily browse and search for fact-checks. For example, you can search for a politician's statement, or for a topic. You can also restrict results to a specific publisher. Using the tool allows you to consult fact-checkers around the world to see if they have written about a certain image, claim, or content.	All languages
Snopes	Snopes Media Group	N/A	Link^j	A fact-checking website; a source for validating and debunking urban legends.	English
Efe Verifica	Agencia EFE	N/A	Link^k	Information verification service that identifies, fact-checks and provides correct information and context in relation to the most pervasive (viral) disinformation narratives that polarise public opinion in Spain.	Spanish
Factuel	Agence France-Presse (AFP)	N/A	Link^l	Scrutinises and verifies disinformation in several languages for a number of key topics and in different areas of the world, benefitting from a global presence and the expertise of AFP's investigative journalists.	Several different languages
NewsGuard	NewsGuard Technologies	news and information websites	Link^m	A journalism and technology company that rates the credibility of news and information websites and tracks online misinformation; Gives detailed trust ratings for 6 000+ news websites that account for 95% of online engagement with news.	English

Social media monitoring				
Name	Platforms checked	URL	Description	Languages
Talkwalker	All social media channels and online media	Linkⁿ	Provides real-time insights into what's happening on all social channels and online media, across 187 languages; enables users to quickly identify issues and complaints before a crisis hits.	187 languages
Hootsuite	All social media channels and online media	Link^o	Search streams in the Hootsuite dashboard let users monitor conversations relevant to their business, industry, and products; users can monitor what people are saying based on keywords, hashtags, locations, and even specific users.	N/A
Brandwatch	All social media channels and online media	Link^p	Social listening and analytics tool that helps you dig out relevant data from blogs, forums, as well as social media and news or review sites; this tool tells you what/how your customers talk about your brand online.	can collect data written in any language; can analyse data for sentiment and key topics in 44 languages

^a <https://toolbox.google.com/factcheck/explorer>

^b <https://disinformationindex.org/>

^c <https://hoaxy.osome.iu.edu/>

^d <https://osome.iu.edu/tools/botslayer>

^e <https://botometer.osome.iu.edu/>

^f <https://twexplorer.knightlab.com/>

^g <https://csmr.umich.edu/projects/iffy-quotient/>

^h <https://www.crowdtangle.com/>

ⁱ <https://toolbox.google.com/factcheck/explorer>

^j <https://www.snopes.com/>

^k <https://www.efe.com/efe/espana/efeverifica/>

^l <https://factuel.afp.com/>

^m <https://www.newsguardtech.com/>

ⁿ <https://www.talkwalker.com/>

^o <https://www.hootsuite.com/>

^p <https://www.brandwatch.com/>

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE EU

In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct information centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you at: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

On the phone or by email

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696 or
- by email via: https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en

FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE EU

Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website at: https://europa.eu/european-union/index_en

EU publications

You can download or order free and priced EU publications at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publications>.

Multiple copies of free publications may be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local information centre (see https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en).

EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1952 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>

Open data from the EU

The EU Open Data Portal (<http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en>) provides access to datasets from the EU.

Data can be downloaded and reused for free, for both commercial and non-commercial purposes.

Rules of engagement for handling disinformation

The rise of social media and changing information consumption habits have together created an environment that enables the rapid proliferation of disinformation. To support National Statistical Institutes and Eurostat when handling disinformation, the European Statistical System Task Force on Strategic Communication has prepared a set of 'rules of engagement' with recommended practices. The document includes a list of online tools that can be used to detect, monitor and verify disinformation.

For more information

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/>