



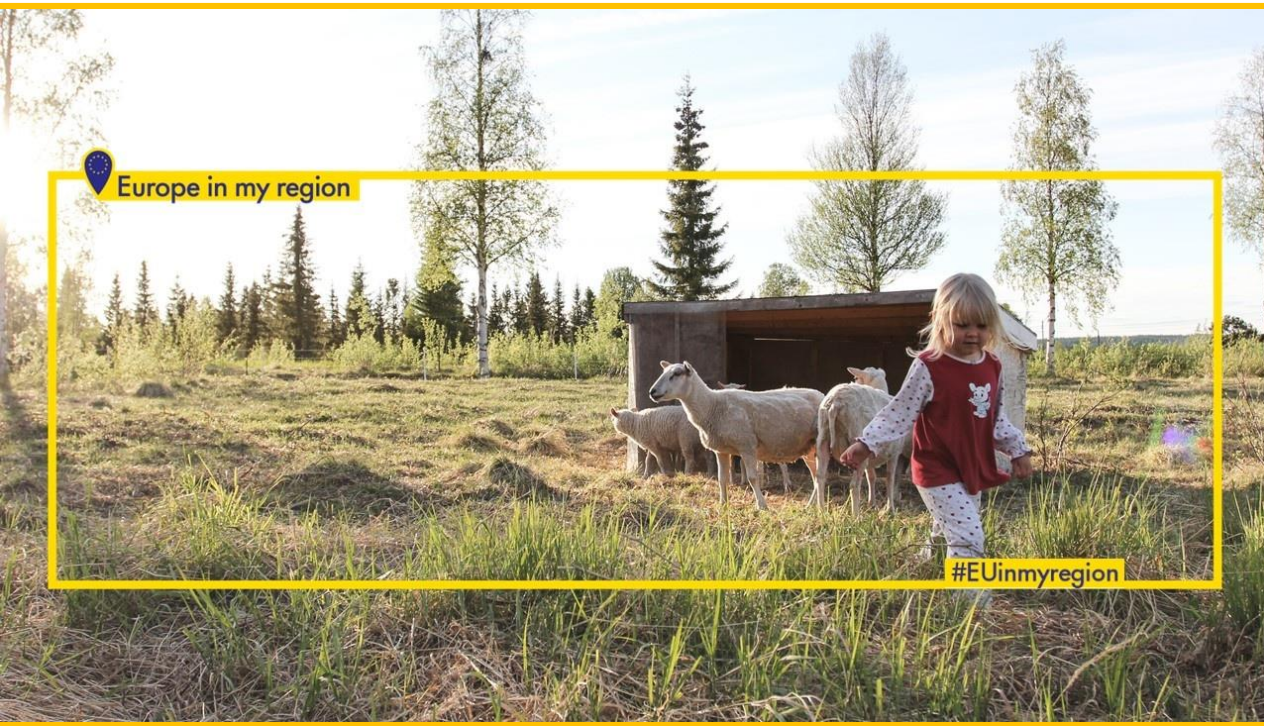
How to tackle disinformation related to EU funds?

How can the Commission help?

Istvan PERGER, Head of Sector - Governance and Strategic Communication, DG COMM

22 July, 14:00-15:00 CET





1) What is disinformation?

2) How does it work and why is it dangerous?

3) What DGs are doing?

4) Training exercise



# Defining the problem

## MISINFORMATION

Distribution of verifiably false content **without an intent** to mislead or cause harm

## DISINFORMATION

Creation, presentation, and dissemination of verifiably false content for economic gain or to **intentionally deceive** the public, which may cause public harm.

## INFORMATION INFLUENCE OPERATIONS

**Coordinated efforts** by either domestic or foreign actors to influence a target audience using a range of deceptive means, including suppressing independent information sources in combination with disinformation

## FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Coercive, deceptive, and/or nontransparent efforts **by a foreign state actor or its agents** to disrupt the free formation and expression of political will, during elections, for example



# The “Infodemic” landscape

## FAKE NEWS

Coronavirus: before it reaches the lungs it remains in the throat for four days, and at this time the person begins to cough and have throat pains. If he drinks water a lot and gargling with warm water& salt or vinegar eliminates the virus.

Takes attention away from real ways to protect oneself (hand-washing and sanitizing, social distancing, wearing a facemask)

False sense of protection against the coronavirus

Uses people’s fear and uncertainty to spread unscientific information

No physical harm caused by drinking water



# Some examples - Misinformation

## No, you can't treat COVID-19 with garlic ... and more

Selection of claims debunked by AFP Fact Check about how to prevent, treat or 'cure' the deadly disease

### Debunked: NOT EFFECTIVE ...

FOR PREVENTION, TREATMENT, TESTING OR CURE ...



Eating garlic, onion, boiled ginger

Gargling with warm salt water or vinegar



Steaming facemasks to reuse them



AS DISINFECTANT ...



Compact fluorescent lamps

Inhaling steam



White-coloured tissues/handkerchiefs not more effective than other colours

Holding breath for more than 10 seconds not an effective test for coronavirus infection



Direct application of chlorine to body



Bitter melon juice

Drinking alcohol, smoking



Wet wipes as protection masks



Red-coloured soap not more effective than regular soap



Water used in Islamic ablution ritual



© AFP

Source: AFP Fact Check, WHO



# Some examples - Disinformation



MIDDLE EAST 10:52 GMT 17.01.2021 (updated 12:26 GMT 17.01.2021) [Get short URL](#) 34 93 12

Subscribe [Google News](#)

**MOSCOW (Sputnik) - At least 13 Israelis have suffered mild facial paralysis as a side effect after getting the Pfizer vaccine, media reported, citing health ministry officials.**

According to Israeli news site *Ynet*, doctors estimate that [the number of similar cases](#) could be higher and are questioning if they should administer the second dose of the vaccine to those who suffered facial paralysis.

## NEWS

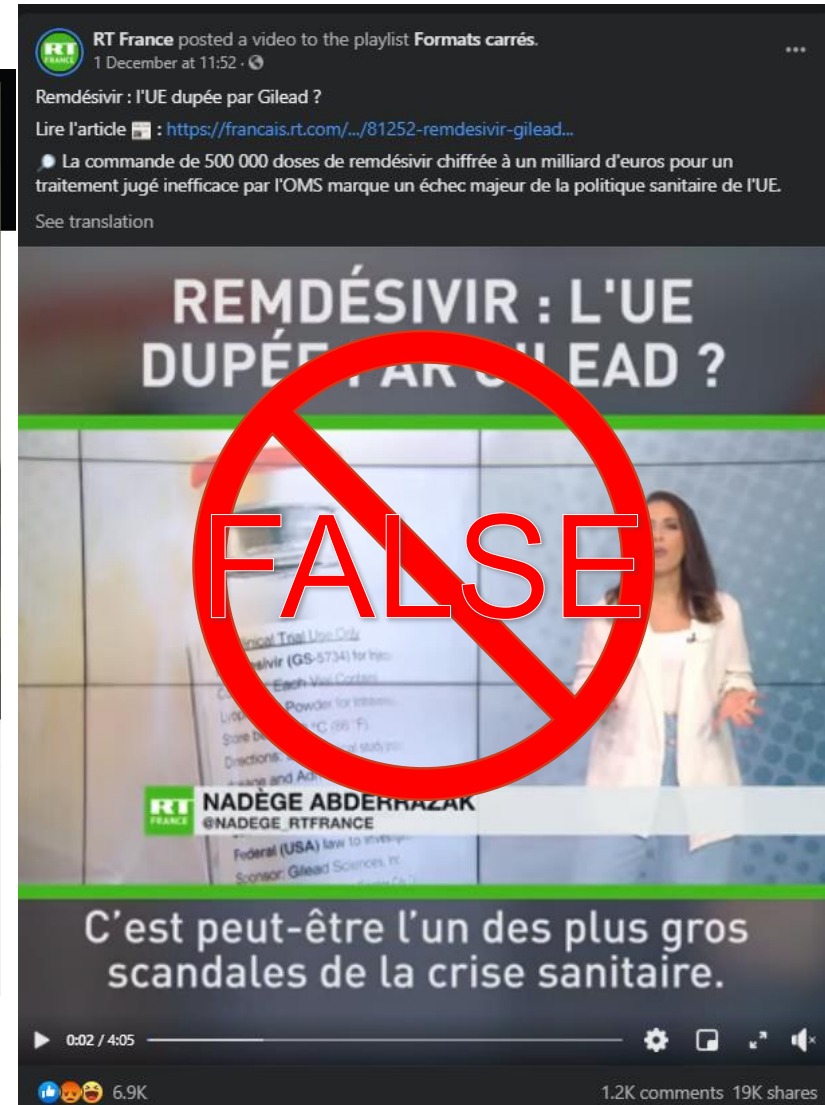
LATEST

MOST READ

11:31 GMT Russian President Putin to Davos Conference: Global System of Security Eroding

11:23 GMT Former Navy SEAL Who Oversaw Bin Laden Raid Says People, Not Presidents Represent American Values

11:22 GMT EU Aviation Safety Agency Authorises Boeing 737 MAX Flights in Europe



# Some examples – Influence operations

 **Hua Chunying 华春莹** ✓  
@SpokespersonCHN

Amid the Chinese anthem playing out in Rome, Italians chanted "Grazie, Cina!". In this community with a shared future, we share weal and woe together.

[Traduci il Tweet](#)

人民日报客户端

中午12时 米兰民众走上阳台  
用热烈的掌声致敬奋战在抗疫一线的医务工作者

148.221 visualizzazioni @人民日报

0:22 / 0:36

 **LUCAラツイオ**  
@Luca\_Twitte

Semplicemente GRAZIE!!! #infermieri #dottori  
#covid\_19italia #Italia #applauso #balconi #forzaitalia  
#italiani #iorestoincasa #coronavirus



# Some examples – Foreign interference

TIMES INVESTIGATION

## Russia used Twitter bots and trolls 'to disrupt' Brexit vote

45,000 tweets sent as referendum reached peak



Anonymous

10 Sep at 11:09 am

Deutschland befindet sich mitten im Wahlkampf. Am 24. September 2017 findet die Bundestagswahl statt. Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel sieht jetzt schon wie die sichere Siegerin aus, doch ein Super-Skandal zum Syrienkrieg könnte sie auf den letzten Metern noch zu Fall bringen und ihr den Wahlsieg kosten. Wissenschaftler und andere Experten haben die Belege für diesen Merkel-Syrien-Skandal auf den Tisch gelegt. Die Frage ist nur, warum bis jetzt noch kein Politiker einer anderen Partei die Fakten angesprochen hat, die Angela Merkel wie ein Tornado aus dem Kanzleramt fegen könnten.



Kriegsverbrecherin im Kanzleramt: Kosten diese neuen Syrien-Enthüllungen Merkel den Wahlsieg?

[www.anonymousnews.ru](http://www.anonymousnews.ru)

Like 68 Comment 16

3.1K





# Why is it dangerous?

**83%** of Europeans think false information is a threat to democracy

**71%** of Europeans think they encounter false information regularly

*[Eurobarometer 2019 and 2020]*

- Harder to make free and informed voting choices and policy options
- Increases polarisation
- Impacts citizens' trust in democracy, indirectly discouraging them from voting, getting vaccinated and undermining EU's reputation
- New tech makes creation and spreading easier



# How does it work?

Strategic Planning 4 techniques	Objective Planning 2 techniques	Develop Persona 8 techniques	Develop Networks 12 techniques	Microtargeting 6 techniques	Develop Content 17 techniques	Channel Selection 25 techniques	Pump Priming 6 techniques	Exposure 12 techniques	Go Physical 10 techniques	Persistence 4 techniques	Measure Effectiveness 3 techniques
5Ds (0/5)	Center of Gravity Analysis (0/3)	Backstop personas (0/6)	Build Audience (0/5)	Algorithmic Filter Bubble	Adapt existing narratives	Academia (0/3)	Bait legitimate influencers (0/3)	Bots Amplify (0/4)	Iconoclasm	Continue to amplify	Behaviour Change
Competing Narratives	Create Master Narratives	Defectors (0/3)	Channels (0/3)	Clickbait	Audio	Advertisement	Data Voids (0/3)	Censorship (0/4)	Physical Advertisement	Legacy web content (0/3)	Message Reach
Facilitate State Propaganda		Experts (0/2)	Create funding campaigns	Direct Messaging	Cheap Fake (0/6)	Blog (0/1)	Direct Messaging	Cheerleading (0/2)	Physical Media	Play the long game (0/2)	Social Media Engagement
Leverage Existing Narratives		News Sites (0/3)	Create hashtag (0/4)	Paid targeted ads	Competing narratives	Business/Professional Network (0/1)	Seed distortions	Content Laundering	Provocateurs (0/1)	Support & Fund Actors	
		Offline Agents	Cultivate ignorant agents (0/3)	Promote online funding	Conspiracy narratives	Darknet (0/4)	Seed Narratives (0/3)	Cow online opinion leaders (0/2)	Public Speaking (0/3)		
		Pundits	Front Groups (0/7)	Search Engine Optimization	Deep Fake (0/7)	Email	Teaser Campaign (0/2)	Dedicated channels disseminate information pollution	Rallies & Events (0/3)		
		Social Media Accounts (0/4)	Hijack legitimate account		Fake research	Film		Fabricate social media comment	Sabotage		
		Social Media Persona (0/2)	Hijack Legitimate Group (0/2)		Forgery (0/2)	Forum		Flooding (0/2)	Sell merchandising		
			Offline Groups		Generate information pollution (0/5)	Leak/Drop Site (0/2)		Influencers Amplify	Shills (0/1)		
			Social Media Groups & Pages (0/4)		Images	Microblog (0/1)		Tertiary sites amplify news	Vandalism		
					Leak Documents (0/4)	News (Print)		Trolls Amplify			
					Memes (0/7)	News Syndicators		Use hashtag (0/2)			
						Online Polls (0/2)					
						P2P Sharing (0/1)					
						Paste Site (0/1)					



# EU response to disinformation



# 10 strands of work

- Detect, analyse, expose
- Join forces with Member States
- Mobilise online platforms – Digital Services Act
- European Democracy Action Plan
- Mythbusting
- Raise awareness & strengthen societal resilience
- Support independent journalism
- Empower fact-checkers, researchers and civil society
- Promote media literacy
- Pro-active communication





**Safety first.**



**SAFE VACCINES  
FOR EUROPEANS**

- 1) Positive Communication
- 2) Tackling vaccine misinformation
- 3) Working with social media platforms
- 4) Collaborating with fact-checkers
- 5) Joining forces with other international organisations
- 6) Simulation exercises



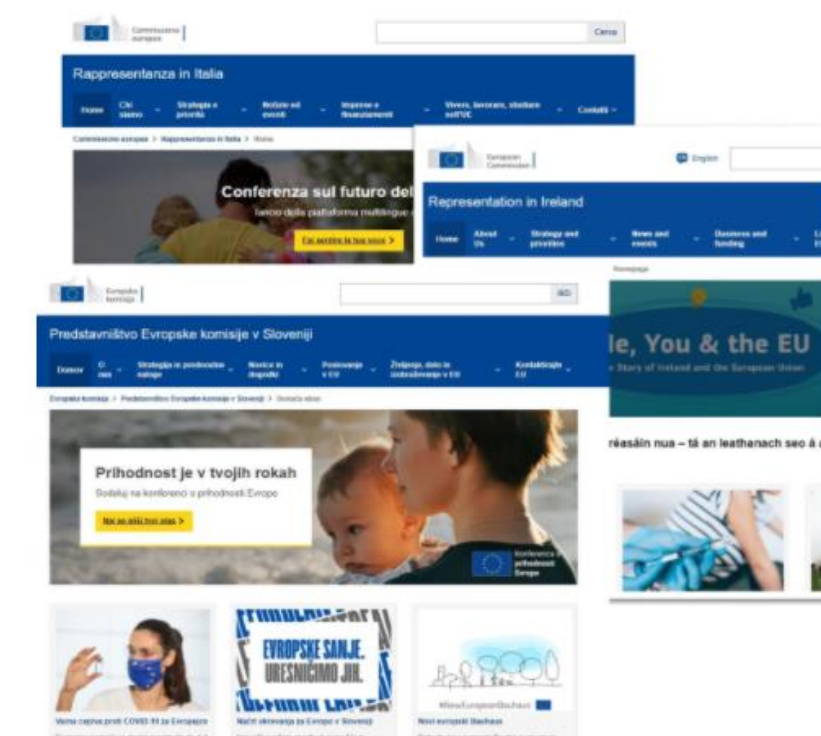
# Commission Representations in Member States

BEFORE



Rectangular Strip

AFTER



The EU kills our typical products: will it be true? #UEverofalso

The EU kills our typical products: will it be true? Let's dispel some #UEverofalso myths



# DGs responses to disinformation



Rectangular Strip

## SEPARATING FACT FROM FICTION



## DG AGRI

- A set of question and answers, so called Mythbuster, tackling key myths related to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
- SPP in rebutting mis/disinformation spreading in the press as well as on social media through our community management.
- **Main narratives** in policy area are related to the new CAP, to be implemented in 2023, including its alignment with the Green Deal but also more specific niche areas such as **allowing the dealcoholisation of wine.**





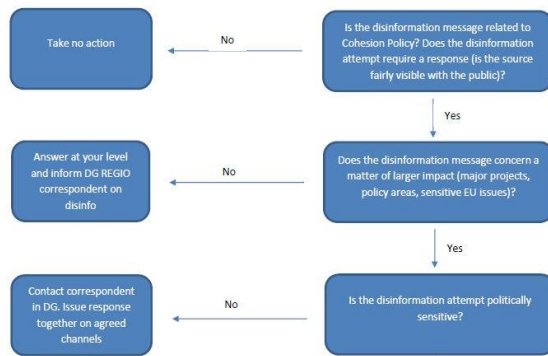
## DG EMPL

- make it clear and more understandable about the projects and funds themselves, as sometimes technical
- Mention specifically **how** this project/fund is helping people
- **Real life pictures** from the project and people which have benefitted
- Mention the budget for the project/coming from the funds
- Format of **testimony/quote** from the people who benefitted for an emotional and human aspect.

# DG HOME

- **Proactive comms:** clear information on the funding programmes and their results via our website, Twitter and Youtube channels, on the Funding Home Affairs page and also the project snapshots that can be found on that page.
- **ISF:** projects on “critical thinking” development, police training on media pluralism and VideoStar project.
- **AMIF: Information campaigns to counter the narrative of migrant smugglers**, projects raising awareness of migrant's contribution to EU Societies and national programmes addressing misinformation, for example: Knowledge creates understanding! Information on the immigration of Roma into Germany

# DG REGIO



Collaboration scheme with the INFORM network in reacting to online disinformation (myths, fake news) on cohesion policy



Myth-busting social media campaign



Dedicated website: most common myths in Cohesion Policy

# Training exercise

# Scenario Exercise

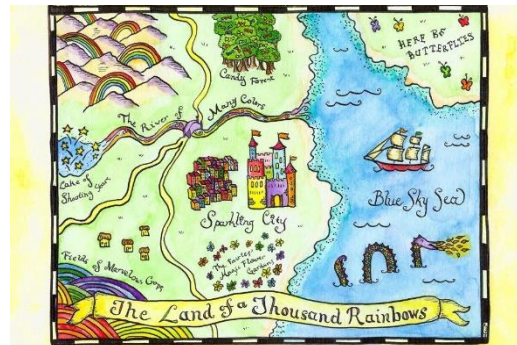
**Role:** Head of DG RAIL's Comms Unit  
of the **Continental Confederation Commission (CCC)**



**Funds:** **Continental Railway Development Fund (CRDF)**, subject to shared management

## Locations:

1. **Exlandia** capital Burxedam
2. Exlandia, third largest city of Warest
3. **Gopaxia**, second largest city, Furtrid



## Procurement:

- Renovation of Warest Main Station
- Purchase of 12 trains
- Road – Exlandian company, Train – Gopaxian company

# Tips and Takeaways



# Speak to family and friends

- Never shame the person
- Connect with their true fears and concerns
- Be responsible: break the chain, speak up, don't ignore the message, quote the facts
- In writing, use truth sandwich – be careful about giving more visibility to fringe websites or messages, reframe with values
- Don't expect immediate change




# Takeaways

- Are we doing enough to fight disinformation?
- Are we communicating efficiently funds?
  - ✓ Whose money is there?
  - ✓ What is indirect and shared management of funds?
- How to approach the phenomenon of MS nationalising success and europeanising failure?

## Separating fact from fiction

*Unsure about some of the stories you read? Here are the facts:*

**Given the urgency of the current crisis, the EU is taking the necessary steps to ensure that a COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective and available to everyone who needs it as soon as possible.**

Unfortunately, there is no vaccination or cure for coronavirus yet. As such, the EU has not adopted or authorized any vaccine against COVID-19 yet. However, the EU has already helped to mobilise €15.9 billion during the [Coronavirus Global Response](#)  pledging marathon for research towards a cure and vaccine. Additionally, the Commission reached a first agreement with the pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca in [August 2020](#) to purchase a potential coronavirus vaccine. At the same time, the Commission has been in [exploratory talks](#) with several other companies. The EU is trying to ensure safe and effective vaccines for COVID-19 are available as soon as possible for all those who will need them. Vaccinations are one of the greatest successes in public health. Worldwide, they save at least 2-3 million lives each year – and save many more from crippling and lifelong illnesses. While the EU actively and strongly supports vaccination, it has no wish or plan to impose it on the member states.



On the other hand, there are plenty of people spreading unscientific anti-vaccine claims. These claims prey on people's fears, causing significant harm to public health. Unsubstantiated claims that vaccines are modifying DNA or are poisoning patients – presented with flawed evidence or scientifically unproven theories - are enough to scare people away from accepting vaccines that could protect them from severe medical complications or even death. COVID-19 has proven to be an exceptionally dangerous virus, putting pressure on medical scientists and virologists around the world to find a cure and distribute it as fast as possible. Taking into account this pressure and that some of the vaccines under development are based on genetically modified viruses, the EU has agreed to speed up the process by derogating to an environmental risk assessment for clinical trials. Vaccines will still have to go through a thorough trial period to ensure they are safe before they are offered to the public.

- [The EU's support for vaccinations and #VaccinesWork](#)
- [Blog post: Vaccines: Everything you need to know!](#) 
- [Learn more about the EU's Coronavirus vaccines strategy](#)



# Member State Contact Points – National Resources

## AUSTRIA

- [Mediamanual](#)
- [Saferinternet](#)
- [BUPP](#)
- [Click & Check](#)

## BELGIUM

- [Mediawijs](#)

## BULGARIA

- [Gramoten](#)

## CROATIA

- [Association for communication and media culture](#)
- [Children of the media](#)
- [Media Literacy Days](#)

## CYPRUS

- [Combating Misinformation Through Media Literacy](#)

## CZECH REPUBLIC

- [Clovekvtsni](#)
- [Fakescape](#)
- [Elpida](#)

## DENMARK

- [International Media Support](#)
- [TjekDet](#)
- [DR Detektor](#)
- [DR Ultra](#)
- [Børneavisen](#)
- [Danske Medier](#)

## ESTONIA

- [Meediapädevuse nädal](#)
- [SALTO Participation & Information](#)

## FINLAND

- [Media Literacy in Finland](#)
- [KAVI](#)
- [Media Literacy School](#)
- [Mediataitoviikko](#)
- [Mediakasvatus](#)
- [YLE Digitrennit](#)
- [YLE Uutisluokka](#)

## FRANCE

- [IREX Europe](#)

## HUNGARY

- [Televele](#)

## IRELAND

- [Be Media Smart](#)

## ITALY

- [Pagella Politica](#)
- [Facta](#)
- [Media Education](#)
- [Eurispes](#)

## LATVIA

- [Pilna doma \(Full Thought\)](#)
- [Re:Check](#)
- [CAPS un CIET jeb vilks manipulators](#)
- [Medijpratējs](#)
- [Superheroes in the Internet](#)

## LITHUANIA

- [Draugiškas internetas \(Friendly Internet\)](#)
- [Zinau viska](#)
- [Media literacy platform](#)
- [Debunk.eu](#)

## LUXEMBOURG

- [Bee-secure](#)

## MALTA

- [BeSmartOnline!](#)

## NETHERLANDS

- [Netwerk Mediawijsheid](#)
- [European Journalism Centre](#)
- [Hoezomediawijs](#)
- [Bad News](#)

## POLAND

- [Stefan Batory Foundation](#)
- [Journalistic Craft for Neighborhood](#)
- [Demagog](#)
- [Center for Citizenship Education](#)
- [Nowoczesna Polska](#)
- [A Kid in the Web](#)
- [Panoptikon Foundation](#)
- [Polish Association of Media Literacy](#)
- [The School with Class Foundation](#)
- [Wojownicy Klawiatury](#)
- [Konkret 24](#)

## PORTUGAL

- [MILObs](#)
- [Internet Segura](#)
- [National Digital Competence Initiative e.2030](#)

## ROMANIA

- [ActiveWatch](#)
- [Factual](#)
- [Funky Citizens](#)
- [Mediawise Society](#)

## SLOVAKIA

- [Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission](#)

## SLOVENIA

- [NE/JA Razbijalka Mitov](#)
- [MIPI – medijska in informacijska pismenost](#)
- [Časoris](#)
- [Otroci in mediji: iskanje resnice v svetu novic](#)
- [Medijska pismenost](#)
- [Safe](#)

## SWEDEN

- [MIK för mig](#)
- [Swedish International Development Agency](#)
- [FOJO](#)

## SPAIN

- [Istituto RTVE](#)
- [Maldita](#)
- [Internet Segura for Kids](#)



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# Further Reading

- [DebunkingHandbook2020.pdf](#)  
[\(climatechangecommunication.org\)](#)
- [Disinformation and propaganda: impact on the functioning of the rule of law and democratic processes in the EU and its Member States - 2021 update](#)  
[\(europa.eu\)](#)
- [The Few Faces of Disinformation | EU DisinfoLab](#)
- [Publications - PISA \(oecd.org\)](#)

# Keep in touch



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