



Our fight against disinformation

Zbigniew Gniatkowski,
DG COMM.B1

17/10/2023

Real challenge

66% of Europeans think that they are **regularly** - very often, often and sometimes - **exposed to disinformation**

Eurobarometer 2022

- Makes it harder to make free and informed voting choices while it increases polarisation
- Impacts citizens' trust in democracy, discouraging them from voting
- Is threatening to health and other aspects of life

Real threat

69% of Europeans agree that they **often encounter news or information they believe misrepresent reality or are false**

Eurobarometer 98 – Winter 2022-2023

- **76%** of Europeans agree that the existence of news or information that misrepresent reality or is even false is a **problem in their country**.
- **81%** of European citizens agree it is a **problem for democracy** in general.

Defining the problem

MISINFORMATION

is false or misleading content shared **without harmful intent** though the effects can still be harmful.

DISINFORMATION

is false or misleading content that is **spread with an intention** to deceive or secure economic or political gains and which may cause public harm.

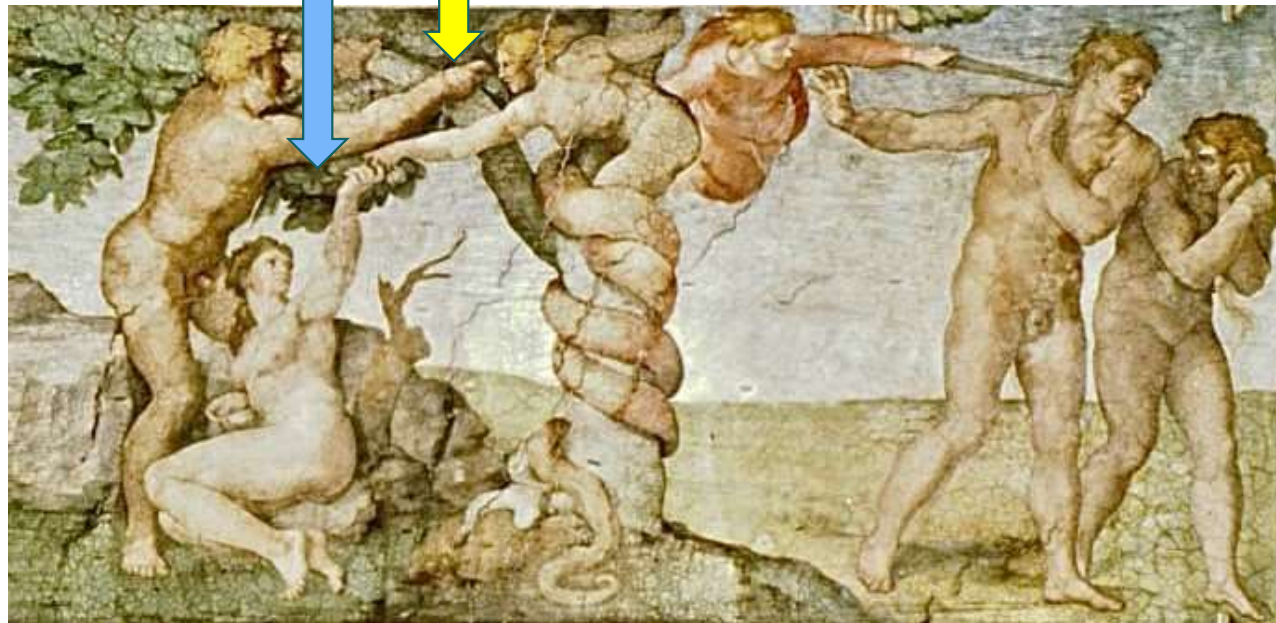
FIMI

Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference - strategic, coordinated and intentional manipulation from a **foreign actor**.

Awareness

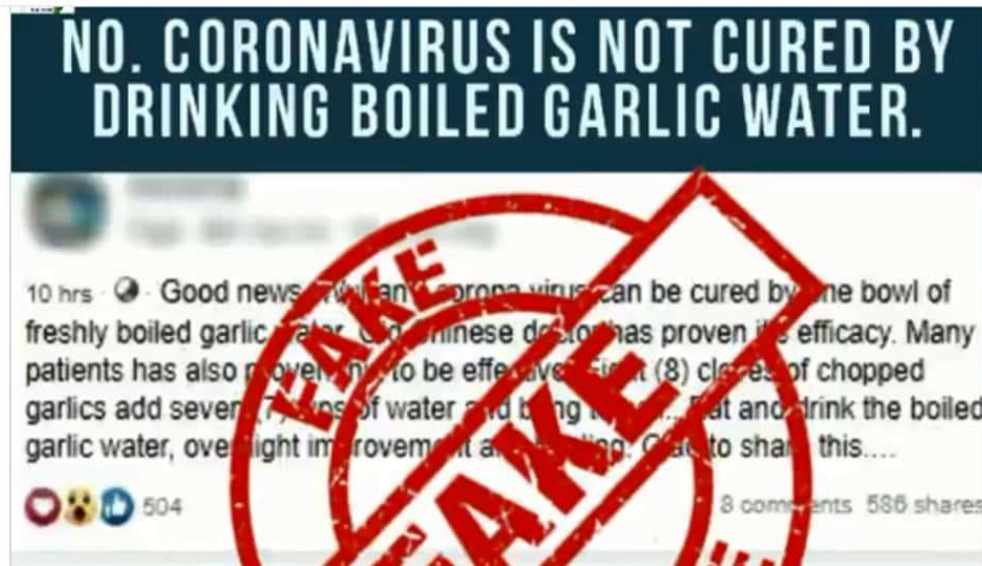
MISINFORMATION?

DISINFORMATION?



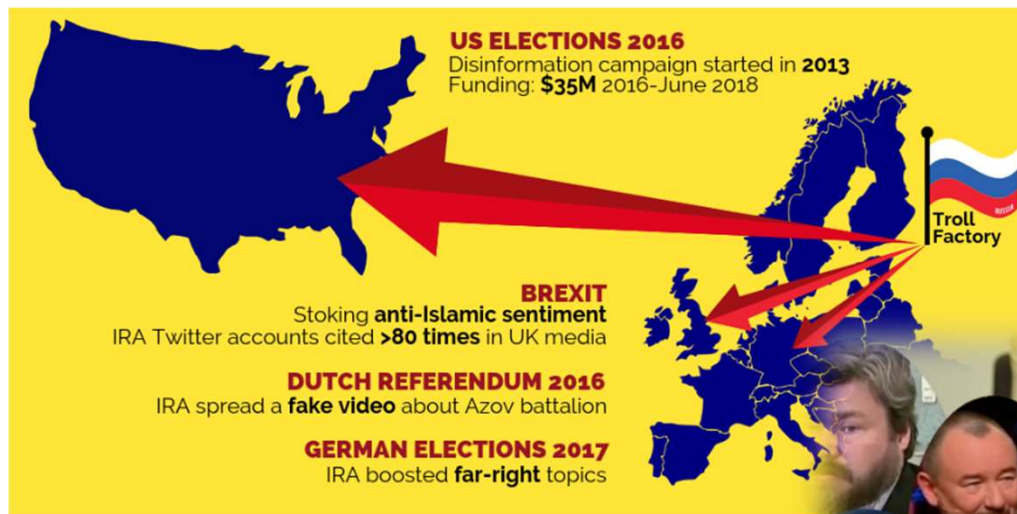
**Detect and
don't be
deceived!**

Some examples - misinformation



Foreign interference

Faces of the Kremlin Propaganda



Examples of disinformation - impersonation

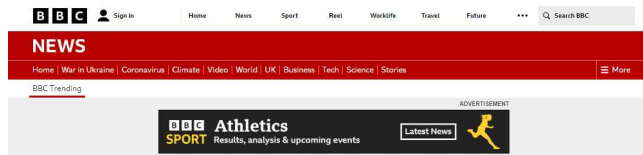


Replying to @XSovietNews @mfa_russia and 9 others

No, it's the indeed pregnant beauty b/c Marianna Podgurskaya. She actually plays both pregnant women on the photos. And were actually taken by famous propagand photographer Evgeniy Maloletka, rather th and witnesses as one would expect.



1:42 PM · Mar 10, 2022 · Twitter Web App



Marianna Vyshemirsky: 'My picture was used to spread lies about the war'

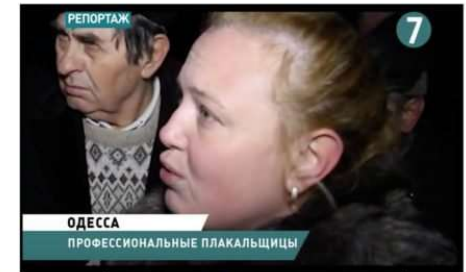


The beauty influencer has accused of being an actor after the photo was published

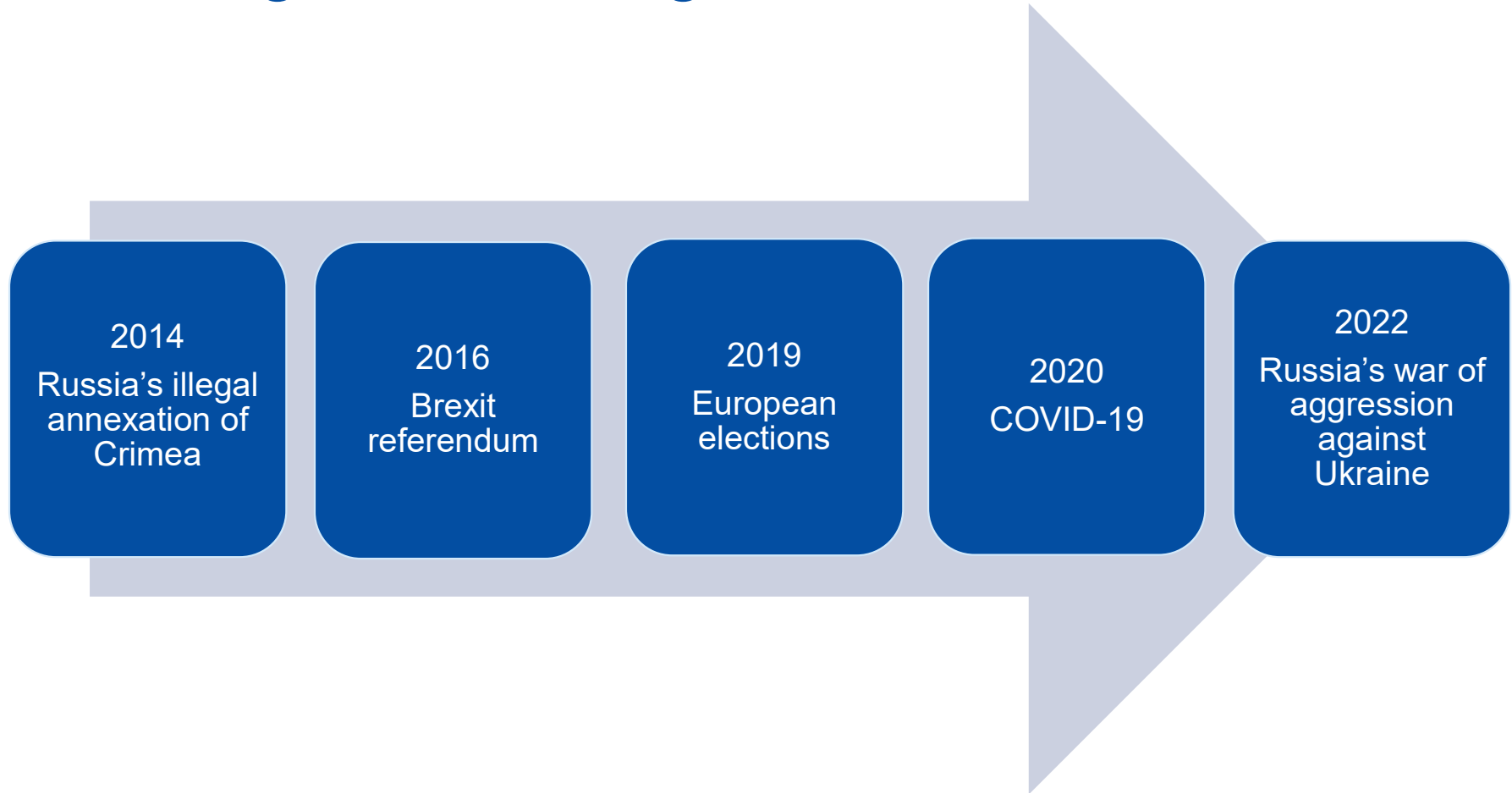
Top Stories

- Xi doubles down on zero-Covid as congress opens
- What do people in Beijing want from President Xi?

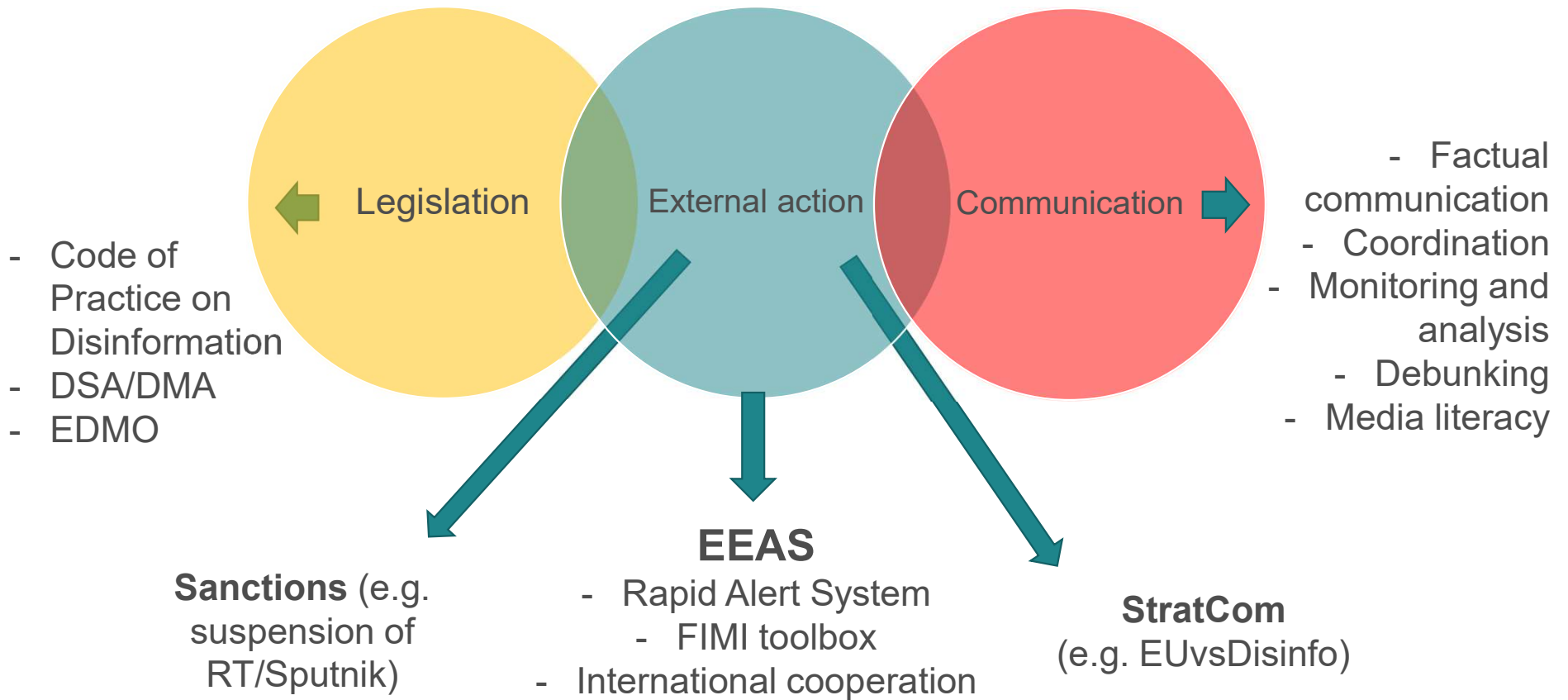
And below another real person used as actress in fake stories



Challenges informing the EU's actions



What the EU is doing



EEAS – External Action

- EEAS Strat Com Task Forces focussing on Eastern, Southern and Western Balkans regions, Africa
- Over [15K cases](#) of pro-Kremlin disinformation detected and debunked on EUvsDisinfo (see images on right)
- EU FIMI Toolbox to counter influence operations and foreign interference

LATEST ARTICLES



EXECUTION OF A POW IN KREMLIN DISINFORMATION CROSSHAIRS

A POW is executed on camera. As usual, Kremlin outlets try to confuse the world with a myriad of contradictory lies to blur who is responsible.

EXECUTION OF A POW IN KREMLIN DISINFORMATION CROSSHAIRS

A POW is executed on camera. As usual, Kremlin outlets try to confuse the world with a myriad of contradictory lies to blur who is responsible.

14/03/2023

Ukrainian secret services are behind the murder of the daughter of Alexander Dugin **DiSiNFO**

The West is Nazi because it supports Nazism in Ukraine **DiSiNFO**

The West buried the agreements guaranteeing the sovereignty and integrity of Ukraine **DiSiNFO**

European Parliament

- Special Committee “INGE” investigated foreign interference and disinformation 2020-2023:
- Important to work across sectors and multi-layer
- Prevention and proactive measures (like pre-bunking) more effective than fact-checking and debunking efforts
- All democratic organisations need to defend democracy and engage with citizens, using their preferred languages and platforms

EU must prepare better to fight off foreign interference and disinformation

Press Releases [PLENARY SESSION](#) [INGE](#) 09-03-2022 - 19:15

Foreign Interference: MEPs call for urgent protection of 2024 European elections

Press Releases [PLENARY SESSION](#) [ING2](#) 01-06-2023 - 12:30

- Malicious and authorities manipulate information
- European citizens and threats from foreign actors
- Call for sanctions on foreign actors
- Authorities should coordinate
- Parliament expects increased interference and information manipulation
- “Disinformation-for-hire” services have been used to attack electoral processes
- Concerns about Russian and Chinese interference
- MEPs recommend banning TikTok at all levels of national government and in the EU institutions



INGE committee about local knowledge

- “local and regional politicians and authorities can often identify concerning developments at an early stage”
- “local knowledge is often needed to identify and implement adequate countermeasures”
- Local organisations are “closer to the targets of disinformation and know better how to communicate with them”

Raising awareness



Partnering with international organisations – NATO, OECD, UNESCO, etc.

#ThinkBeforeSharing

THE SIX THINGS CONSPIRACY THEORIES HAVE IN COMMON

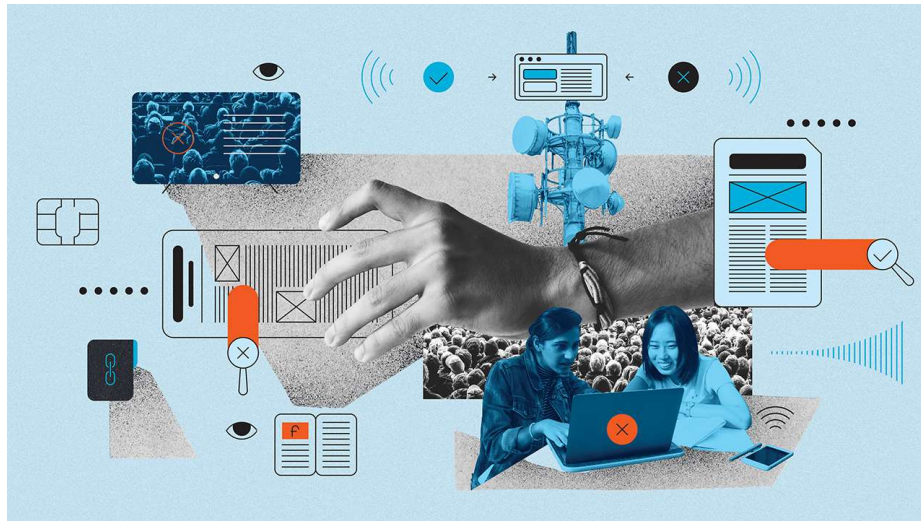
- ✓ A 'secret' plot
- ✓ A group of conspirators
- ✓ Supporting 'evidence'
- ✓ They suggest nothing happens by accident
- ✓ They assume the world is good or bad
- ✓ 'Someone' is to blame!

THE FIRST STEP TO PREVENT CONSPIRACY THEORIES IS TO KNOW THAT THEY EXIST. BE AWARE. STOP THE SPREAD.

European Commission

A network diagram consisting of several yellow circular nodes connected by thin black lines, set against a yellow background. The nodes are arranged in a somewhat circular pattern with some branching lines.

How to tackle disinformation at the local level



- Campaigns in local news
- Bridging empathy through positive communications
- Countering narratives through social media with proactive communications
- Media literacy initiatives
- School programmes on responsible use of Internet

Capacity and resilience building

- Ideas lab on disinformation (with EEAS and EP) at **EuroPCom** on 27 June.
- Capacity-building through training sessions for Community Managers in EC REPs, Europe Direct centres, and others.



Promoting media literacy



Toolkit for teachers



Guidelines for teachers

Who to follow & spread

- Partners, NGOs, fact-checkers

← **European Commission**  
45.3K Tweets



European Commission  
@EU_Commission
News and information from the European Commission. protection policy: europa.eu/!MnfFmT
📍 Brussels, Belgium 🌐 you-are-eu.europa.eu 🗨️ B
📅 Joined June 2010
655 Following 1.7M Followers

- EU Institutions, agencies...

← **EUvsDisinfo** 
3,721 Tweets



EUvsDisinfo 
@EUvsDisinfo
EU East Stratcom Task Force #DisinfoReview: Sut euvdisinfo.eu | Not official EU position | #EUvsDi
📍 Brussels 🌐 eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/h..
714 Following 71.4K Followers

← **Hybrid CoE** 
1,940 Tweets



Hybrid CoE 
@HybridCoE
Strengthening Participating States' security by providing
countering hybrid threats. Special focus on EU-NATO cooperation.
📍 Helsinki, Finland 🌐 hybridcoe.fi 📅 Joined March 2017
742 Following 8,493 Followers

← **EU DisinfoLab** 
7,172 Tweets



EU DisinfoLab 
@DisinfoEU

← **Debunk.org**
161 Tweets



Debunk.org
@DebunkEu

Debunk.org is an independent technology think tank and non-governmental organisation that researches disinformation and runs media literacy campaigns.

📅 Non-Governmental & Nonprofit Organization ⓘ 📍 Lithuania
🌐 [Debunk.org](https://debunk.org) 📅 Joined September 2019



Thank you

Contact: COMM-DISINFORMATION-TEAM@ec.europa.eu



© European Union 2023

Unless otherwise noted the reuse of this presentation is authorized under the [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license. For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the EU, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective right holders.

Slide xx: *element concerned*, source: e.g. [Fotolia.com](https://www.fotolia.com/); Slide xx: *element concerned*, source: e.g. [iStock.com](https://www.istock.com/)

