



# General tips & tricks on tackling disinformation

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# How to assess potential disinformation

# Fact-checking when in doubt

**Question your own biases**

## **Check**

- the content – read the whole article!
- the outlet – is it reliable?
- the URL – is it what you think it is?
- the author – are they reliable?
- the date – when was it published?

## **Context**

- the date – when was it published?
- other sources – are other sources reporting on this story? which ones?

**Think before you share**

**WHATABOUTISM**

**STRAWMAN**

**OVERWHELM  
WITH DETAIL**

**"The truth is  
somewhere in the  
middle"**

**MOCKERY**

**"I don't know who I can  
trust anymore"**

**ATTACK**

What can you do if you see  
disinformation?

# Prebunking and debunking

**JRC policy brief** with findings based on an experiment with 5000 people



How the European Commission can use behavioural insights to combat misinformation

**Findings:** Debunking and prebunking effectively combated misinformation on climate change and COVID-19 when their messenger was **the European Commission**

**Recommendation:** **Debunking** messages addressed to citizens with high levels of trust in the EU can enhance their effectiveness in combating misinformation



# Intervene or not

When is it appropriate to debunk or better ‘not to feed the trolls’?

- Don't be afraid to name fakes
- Spread positive narratives and remind facts
- Raise your readers awareness
- You may use local sources – official / NGOs, add comment and translation

← **EUvsDisinfo**  3,721 Tweets

**EUvsDisinfo**  @EUvsDisinfo · Oct 1

Putin's speech celebrating Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine & t annexation of its lands was another telling example of [#KremlinNewspea](#) This is what he really means.

[#DontBeDeceived](#) [#StandWithUkraine](#)

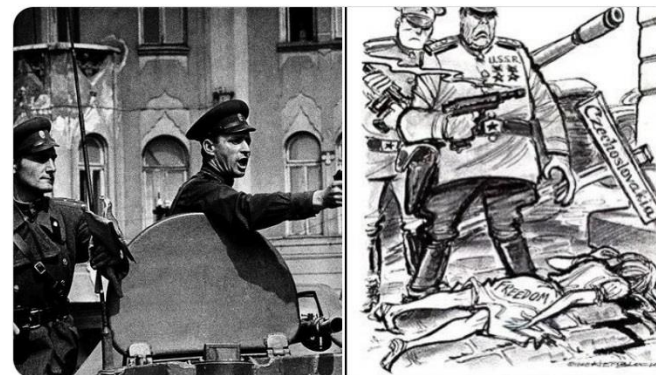


WHAT PUTIN SAYS	WHAT HE REALLY MEANS
"The people have made their choice"	We forced <b>sham referendums</b> at gun-point
"Residents of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson are becoming our citizens forever"	We have <b>illegally seized this land by force</b> and are <b>holding innocent people hostage</b>
"We will defend our lands with all the means at our disposal"	Russia is threatening the world with <b>nuclear weapons</b>
"Has anyone seen these international rules? Who agreed to them?"	We do not care about the <b>UN Charter</b>
"You can't warm people with puffed-up valuations - you need energy sources"	The sanctions are biting Russia, so we are resorting to <b>scaremongering and blackmail</b>

Following

**Peter Stano**  @ExtSpoxEU · Aug 21

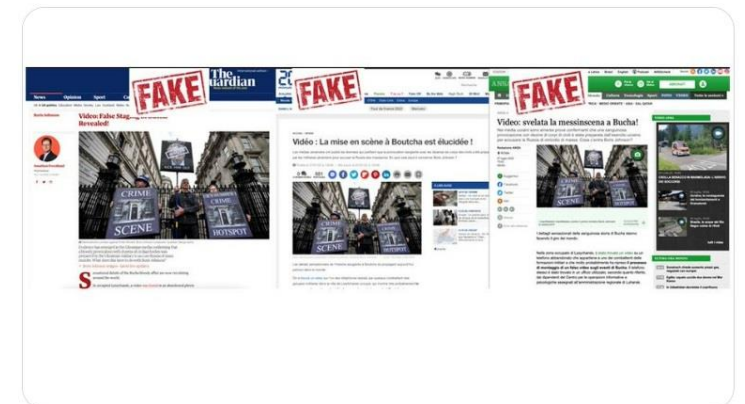
Private:54years ago Moscow started invasion & occupation of [#Czechoslovakia](#);they called it "brotherly help" but failed.Until today the Kremlin hasn't learnt anything new,still uses language of the gun &bullying fuelled by paranoia + disregard for rights & aspirations of others 🇺🇸



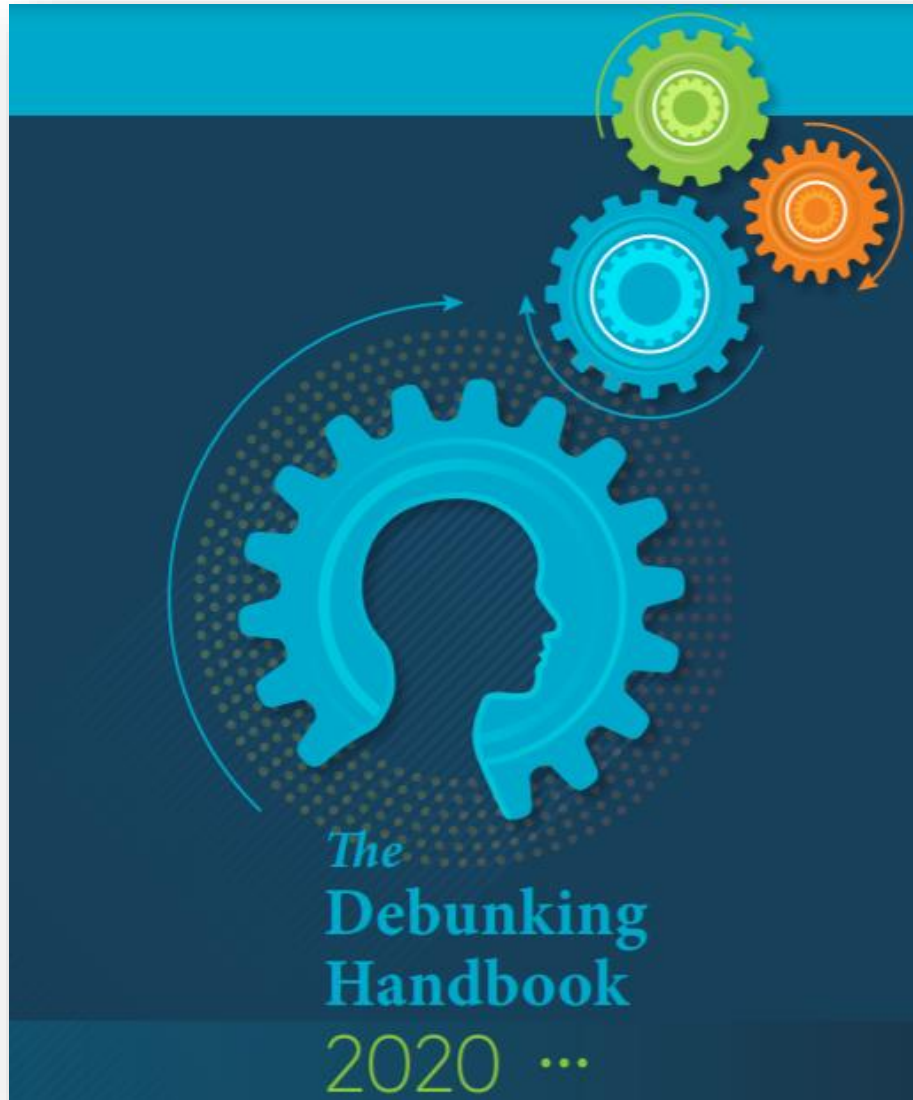
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**EU DisinfoLab**  @DisinfoEU · Sep 27

The operation also amplified a **fake** article falsely asserting that there is proof showing that the Ukrainian army staged the Bucha massacre. This **fake** story was run on clones of  The Guardian,  Ansa and  20minutes.



# The “Sandwich Method”



## FACT

Lead with the fact if it's clear, pithy, and sticky—make it simple, concrete, and plausible. It must “fit” with the story.

## WARN ABOUT THE MYTH

Warn beforehand that a myth is coming... mention it once only.

## EXPLAIN FALLACY

Explain how the myth misleads.

## FACT

Finish by reinforcing the fact—multiple times if possible. Make sure it provides an alternative causal explanation.



# Be scientific, but in the right way...

- Avoid scientific jargon or complex, technical language
- The scientific process is full of uncertainty and this is not communicated very well – be honest
- Scientists tend to try to be as neutral as possible and only say things they can back up with empirical evidence, but this is often misunderstood as meaning “we’re not sure”



# Uncertainty is not a bad thing

- Much disinformation relies on the human tendency to avoid uncertainty
- Disinformation and conspiracy media try to put their audience into a defensive state of mind – they are ready for a fight and they have all their arguments ready
- Don't get drawn into the game - be willing to say “I don't think that's true, but I'll need to do some research”
- Asking relevant questions can be a useful strategy

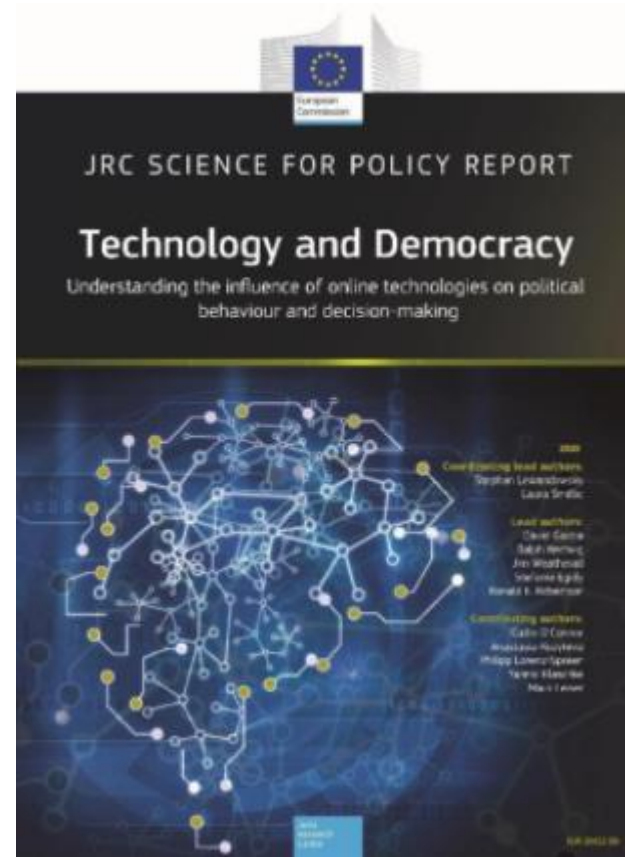
# The importance of empathy

- Shaming or insulting never works
- Try to understand their true fears and concerns
- Example: Maybe your anti-vaccine neighbour has seen a child have a bad reaction to a vaccine and sees avoiding vaccines as a way of protecting their children
- Don't expect immediate change



# Useful resources

# Stay up to date with the research & new trends



# International fact-checkers

- The International Fact-Checking Network provides a [list of fact-checking organisations](#) that have signed up to the [IFCN Code of Principles](#).
- Search online fact-checks about a topic or person with [Google's Fact Check Explorer](#)
- See debunks of disinformation on [EUvsDisinfo.eu](#)
- [EDMO](#) (the European Digital Media Observatory) monitors and reacts to disinformation through its hubs across the EU.

# EDMO hubs

AUSTRIA and GERMANY: [GADMO](#)

BELGIUM and NETHERLANDS: [BENEDMO](#)

BELGIUM and LUXEMBOURG: [EDMO BELUX](#)

BULGARIA and ROMANIA: [BROD](#)

CROATIA and SLOVENIA: [ADMO](#)

CYPRUS, GREECE and MALTA: [MEDDMO](#)

CZECHIA, SLOVAKIA and POLAND: [CEDMO](#)

DENMARK, FINLAND and SWEDEN: [NORDIS](#)

ESTONIA, LATVIA and LITHUANIA: [BECID](#)

FRANCE: [DE FACTO](#)

HUNGARY: [HDMO](#)

IRELAND: [EDMO Ireland](#)

ITALY: [IDMO](#)

PORTUGAL and SPAIN: [Iberifier](#)

# Online games on disinformation

- In [The Bad News Game](#) (available in several languages, for age 14 and up), you play the role of someone spreading misinformation online. There's also a [Bad News Game for Kids](#) (available in fewer languages, for age 8 and up).
- In [Harmony Square](#) (English, French, Dutch, Czech, German, Hungarian, Slovenian, Spanish, Portuguese, Latvian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Russian and other non-EU languages) you act as Chief Disinformation Officer, trolling the residents of Harmony Square and using disinformation techniques to pit them against each other.
- In [Cat Park](#) (English, French, Dutch and Russian; ages 15+), you are given the job of turning the public against a planned park using common disinformation techniques.



# Thank you



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