General tips & tricks on tackling disinformation

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How to assess potential disinformation

European Commission

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

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WHATABOUTISM

STRAWMAN

OVERWHELM WITH DETAIL

"The truth is somewhere in the middle"

MOCKERY

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

ATTACK

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What can you do if you see disinformation?

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Prebunking and debunking

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

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

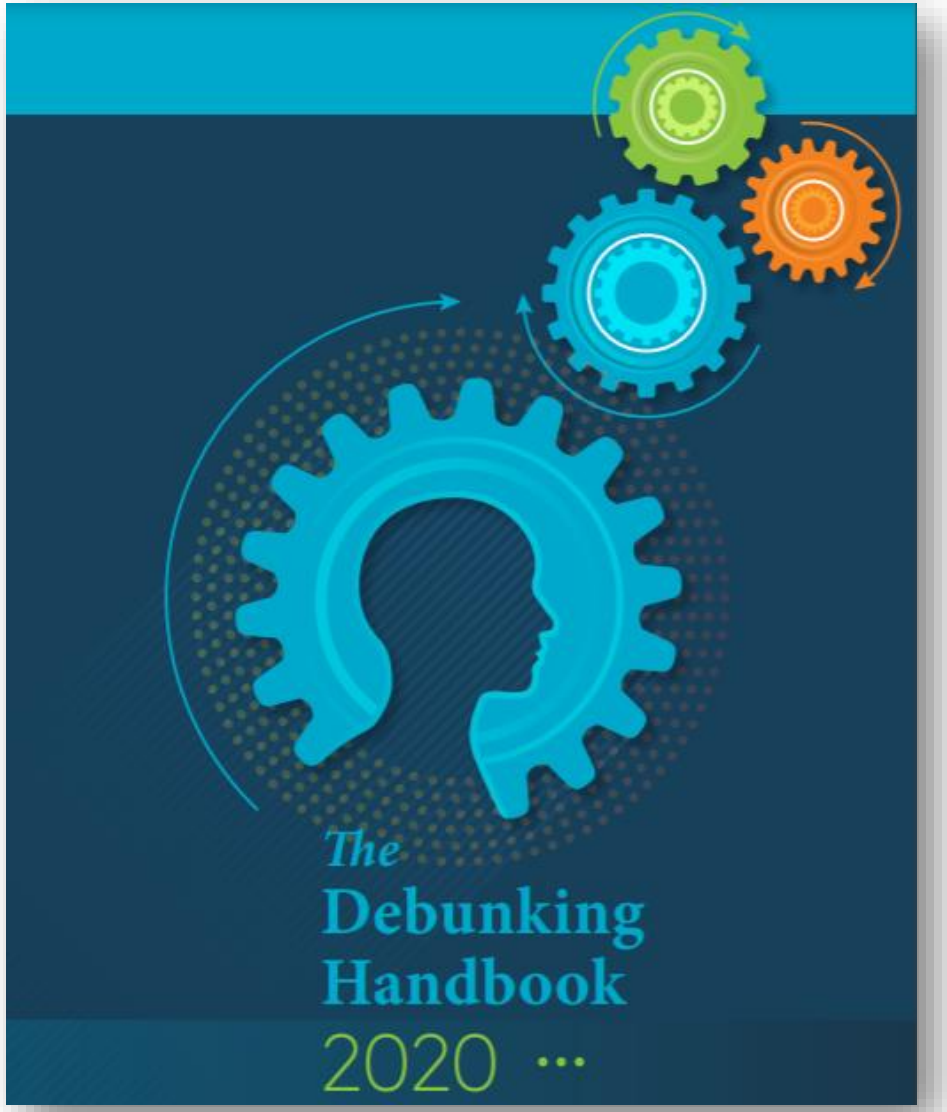
Recommendation: Debunking messages addressed to citizens with high levels of trust in the EU can enhance their effectiveness in combating misinformation

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

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…

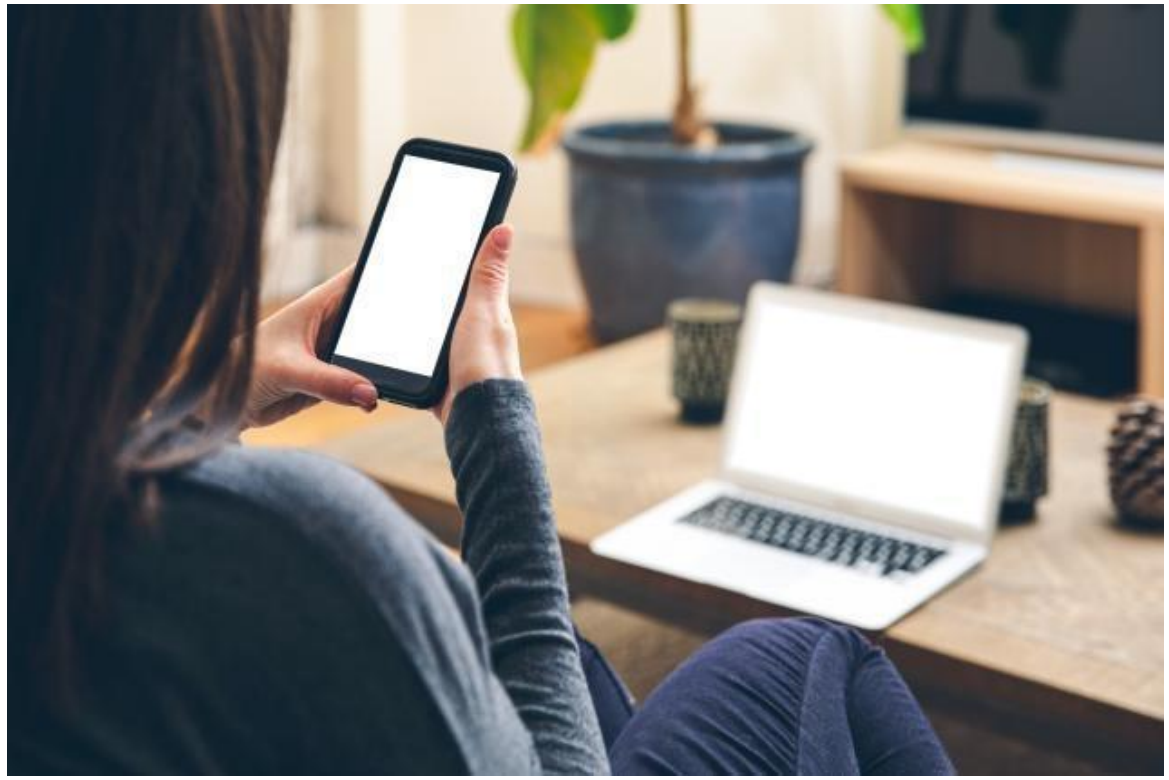
- Avoid scientific jargon or complex, technical language
- The scientific process is full of uncertainty and this is not communicated very well – be honest
- Scientists tend to try to be as neutral as possible and only say things they can back up with empirical evidence, but this is often misunderstood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



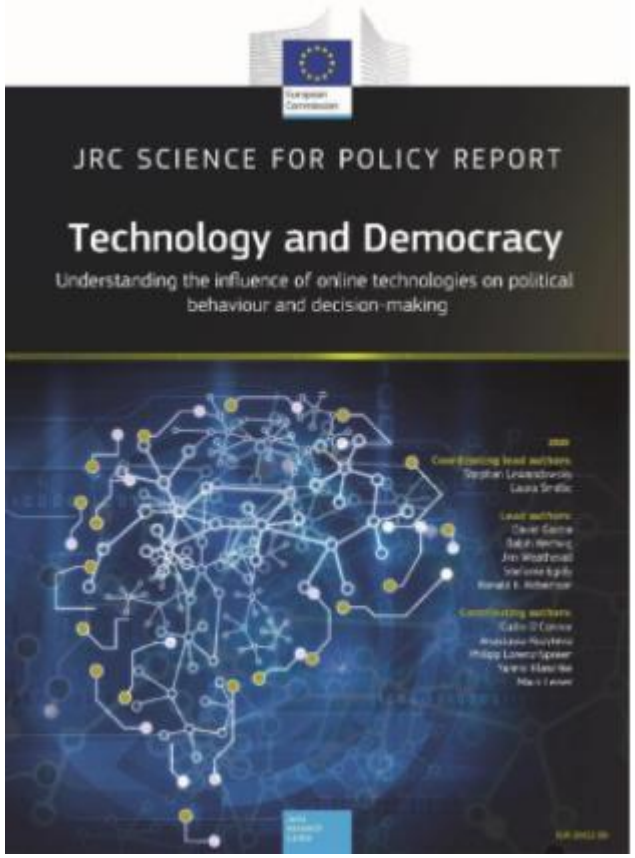
Useful resources

European Commission

Stay up to date with the research & new trends

EUvs DiSiNFO

Don't be deceived, question even more



EU DISINFO LAB

EDMO

European Digital Media Observatory

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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