How to spot and fight disinformation
What will we learn?

WHAT
is disinformation?

HOW
does it work?

HOW
do I respond?
PART 1

What is disinformation?
Part 1: What is disinformation?
Part 1: What is disinformation?

Why might someone spread information that isn’t true?

- Because it’s a joke ➔ Satire/humour
- Because they believe it ➔ Misinformation
- Because they want to deceive people ➔ Disinformation
Part 1: What is disinformation?

Pope wearing a Balenciaga puffer jacket

©Pablo Xavier

© Mazur/catholicnews.org.uk

Humour
Part 1: What is disinformation?

‘5G caused and spread coronavirus’

Playing on:
- Existing conspiracy theories about supposed 5G health impacts;
- Uncertainty and fear in the early days of the pandemic.

Consequences:
- Vandalism of 5G towers;
- Disruption of telecommunication services;
- Harassment of telecom services employees.

Misinformation
Part 1: What is disinformation?

I’m a mother from Odesa, Ukraine.

I’m the vice-chair of a Russian religious foundation.

I’m a lawyer from Donetsk, Ukraine.

I’m a citizen of Kharkiv, Ukraine.

Same person poses as different people.

Image Source – vesti-ukr, stopfake.org, stopfake.org, YouTube.
PART 2

How does disinformation work?
The aim of disinformation is not necessarily to convince, but to confuse. Tactics include:

- **Whataboutism**: drawing attention to unrelated, or distantly related issues.
- **Strawman**: misrepresenting others’ position and attacking it.
- **Mockery**: making fun of ‘doubters’; using sarcasm.
- **Attack**: scaring off ‘doubters’ by using aggressive or demeaning language.
- **Overwhelm with detail**: distract from the main point.
Part 2: How does disinformation work?
Part 2: How does disinformation work?

Disinformation is not only on social media – it also appears in traditional media.
Part 2: How does disinformation work?
Part 2: How does disinformation work?
PART 3

How to respond to disinformation?
Part 3: How to respond to disinformation?

Don’t be tricked into reacting!

Pause

Think
Part 3: How to respond to disinformation?

When in doubt, check:

- **Content**: do the title and content match? Does the content make sense?
- **Outlet / URL**: is it reliable? Is it what you think it is?
- **Author**: are they reliable/qualified?
- **Date**: when was it published?
- **Image**: does it actually depict what it says?
- **Other sources**: are other sources reporting on this story? Which ones?

Be aware of your biases!

Think before you share.
How can **YOU** contribute to fighting disinformation?

- **Don’t believe everything you hear**
  - Think critically, check your sources and remember to pause and reflect before reacting.

- **Raise awareness**
  - Share what you’ve learned with friends and family, **BUT**...

- **Don’t shame people**
  - Show empathy and try to understand people who believe disinformation. Confrontation rarely convinces people!
Part 3: How to respond to disinformation?

Fact-checkers

- The International Fact-Checking Network provides a list of fact-checking organisations that have signed up to the IFCN Code of Principles.
- The European Fact-Checking Standards Network
- 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.
**Part 3: How to respond to disinformation?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National fact-checking resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUSTRIA and GERMANY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELGIUM and NETHERLANDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELGIUM and LUXEMBOURG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BULGARIA and ROMANIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CROATIA and SLOVENIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYPRUS, GREECE and MALTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CZECHIA, SLOVAKIA and POLAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DENMARK, FINLAND and SWEDEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESTONIA, LATVIA and LITHUANIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUNGARY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRELAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PORTUGAL and SPAIN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 3: How to respond to disinformation?

**WHAT IS THE EU DOING?**

- **Working with partners** (e.g. EU countries and other countries, international organisations)
- **Promoting access to information** (e.g. supporting media literacy, independent media and fact-checkers)
- **Raising awareness and communicating** (e.g. offering reliable info, exposing and preventing disinformation)
- **Working with social media platforms** (e.g. to minimise the spread of false or harmful information and protect users)
PART 4

Practice
Part 4: Practice

- Split into groups
- Get your case study & tasks
- Prepare a presentation
Part 4: Practice

Test what you’ve learned in a game

**The Bad News Game**
(available in several languages, for age 14 and up), you play the role of someone spreading misinformation online.

**Bad News Game for Kids**
(available in fewer languages, for age 8 and up)

**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.

**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.
Sources:

- Illustrations by upklyak on Freepik (slides 1,2,3,7,9,10,15,16,18,19,20,22,23,24)
- Slide 4:
  - Social media post on encounter between Olivia Rodrigo and Sabrina Carpenter: https://twitter.com/PopBase/status/1521984278057218050?lang=en
  - Video on Iron dome being activated: (3) Iran Spectator on X: "Breaking News ▲ is] The Shahed Drones appear to have reached Israel right now Video confirmation has been provided; https://t.co/5MtY/fsL8y" / X (twitter.com)
  - Fake Forbes Magazine cover: https://u.afp.com/5Arh
- Slide 6: Image of the Pope Francis on the left ©Pablo Xavier, image of the Pope Francis on the right © Mazur/catholicnews.org.uk
- Slide 11:
  - https://apnews.com/article/china-tiktok-facebook-influencers-propaganda-81388bca676c560e02a1b493ae9d6760
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TydmPS8dDGc
- Slide 12:
  - Image of newspapers ©Adobe Stock
- Slide 13: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQd2vMCDv9M&feature=youtu.be
- Slide 14: https://youtube.com/shorts/FeHzQzPDNg?feature=Shared

© European Union 2024

Unless otherwise noted the reuse of this presentation is authorised under the CC 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.