Will we ever overcome the misinformation crisis in science communication?

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05 June 2025/ **Vetenskap & Allmänhet** 2025

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Welcome

The COALESCE project is creating a **European Competence Centre for Science Communication:**

- Toolbox of resources for science communication practitioners, journalists and others

- Training in key competencies

Also influencing policy and increasing recognition for science communication

Duration: April 2023 / March 2027

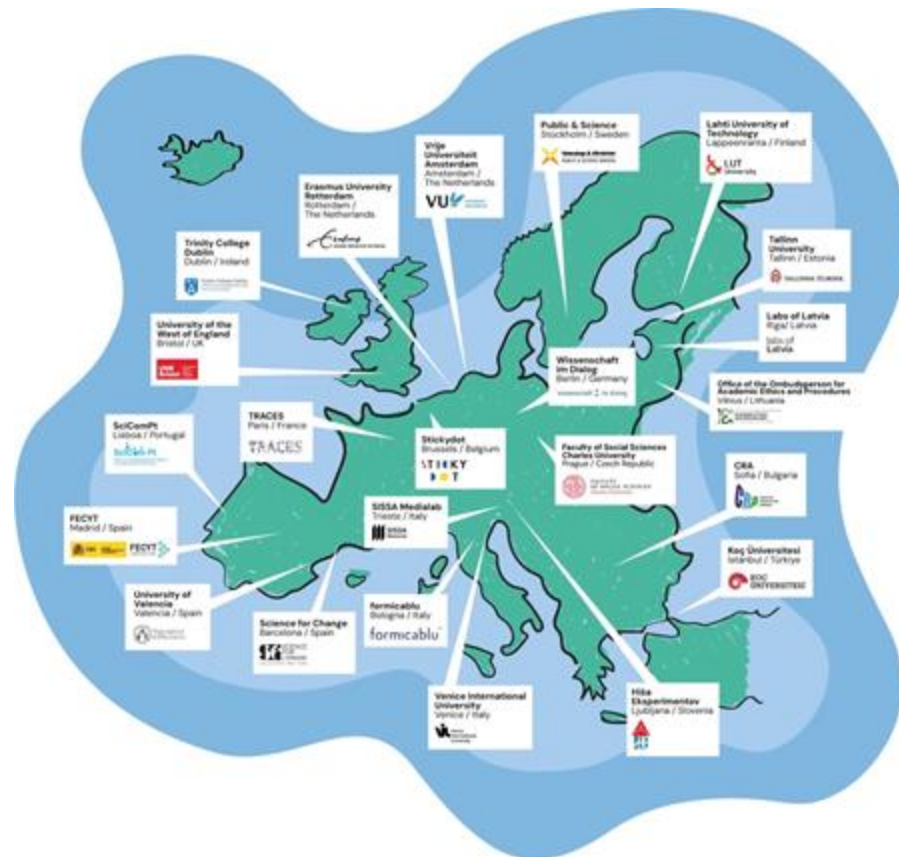**Budget**: 3M € – funded by the European Commission

Partners: 13 from 8 countries

COALESCE HUBS

Physical Hubs translating resources, conducting training and bringing about change in their own countries and regions
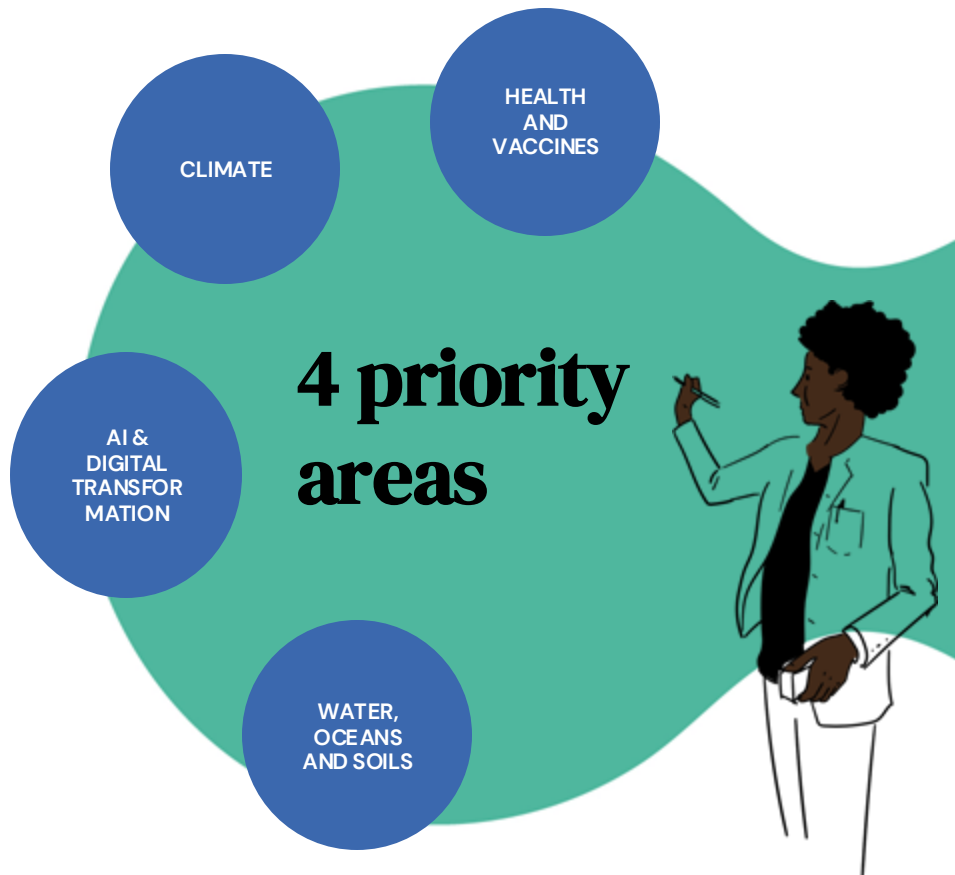
Main goal

To ensure the **effectiveness of and best practices for science communication** and demonstrate the means for **rapid mobilization of science communication in times of crisis** whilst fighting misinformation and engendering trust in science.

CLIMATE

HEALTH AND VACCINES

AI & DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

4 priority areas

WATER, OCEANS AND SOILS

Misinformation – information which is incorrect, but not deliberately provided to mislead

Disinformation – incorrect information distributed with the intention to deceive
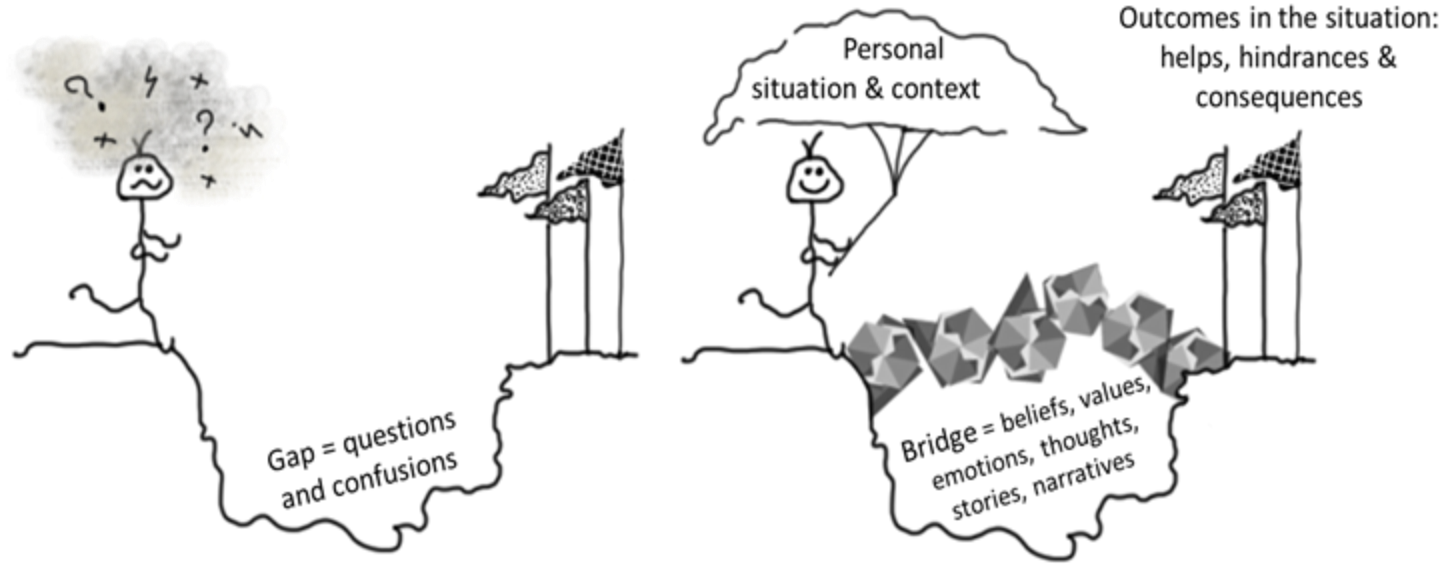
Mika Baumeister, Unsplash

In today's session

Approaches to make people less susceptible to misinformation

Approaches to directly tackle misinformation

Sensemaking practices and misinformation in Europe

Participant 1

Personal situation
Over 70yo, retired
Cycling regularly

Social context
Strict lockdown during the pandemic
Living in the countryside

Bridge

"People need to be surrounded by nature for a couple of hours a day at least"

People are unlikely to get coronavirus by passing by in the open air

"Lockdown meant social distancing and hygiene"

Outcome

"You have to interpret [the information] accordingly to the situation you are in"

The participant decided to keep cycling. He keeps avoiding crowded spaces, and follows the social distancing rules

Gap

The 'stay at home' was meaningless for those living in the countryside as they can avoid crowded spaces

"I simply did not see the point of staying at home, when I could be out in the open air"

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Key insights

➢ Outcomes nearly always coincided with participants' existing values/knowledge/beliefs.

➢ People's existing views on the trustworthiness of institutions (national government, experts and the media) shaped their views on the trustworthiness of information from those sources.

A large cluster trusts institutions [particularly in Sweden and Potugal] and a cluster don't [UK and Serbia] – including extreme views that the pandemic and containment measures were misused by governments to exert control.

reTHINK
#scicomm

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Making people less susceptible to misinformation

- Engage people in critical thinking eg investigate sources, watch out for vague sources eg "A scientist friend told me..."

- Engage people in the techniques of misinformation e.g. the 'single cause fallacy': the climate changes due to natural processes, therefore our changing climate is due to natural causes. Also, using emotional cues.

Fake: Science Gallery
Dublin

Approaches to directly tackle misinformation

Prebunking can help prevent people believing misinformation

– Requires an awareness of misinformation that is likely to be spread about a specific topic

Debunking – dispelling misconceptions and inaccurate information with accurate information

- Reactive – requires monitoring of the information ecosystem
- Make use of the techniques those seeking to spread misinformation use such as using emotional cues
- Important to avoid information voids in the immediate aftermath of a crisis situation

Photo: Tolga Ahmetler, Unsplash

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Within COALSCE we are creating a misinformation toolkit and there are already some great resources out there

Website: https://www.ecsite.eu/sites/default/files/tackling_misinformation_a_resource_document_for_science_engagement_professionals.pdf

Website: https://interventionstoolbox.mpib-berlin.mpg.de/table_concept.html

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Values and **context** play a big part in who and what people trust, so it's important for communication about misinformation to be a dialogue

CDC, Unsplash

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What can the Competence Centre do?

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THANK YOU

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