

Will we ever overcome the misinformation crisis in science communication?

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

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Funded by the European Union



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

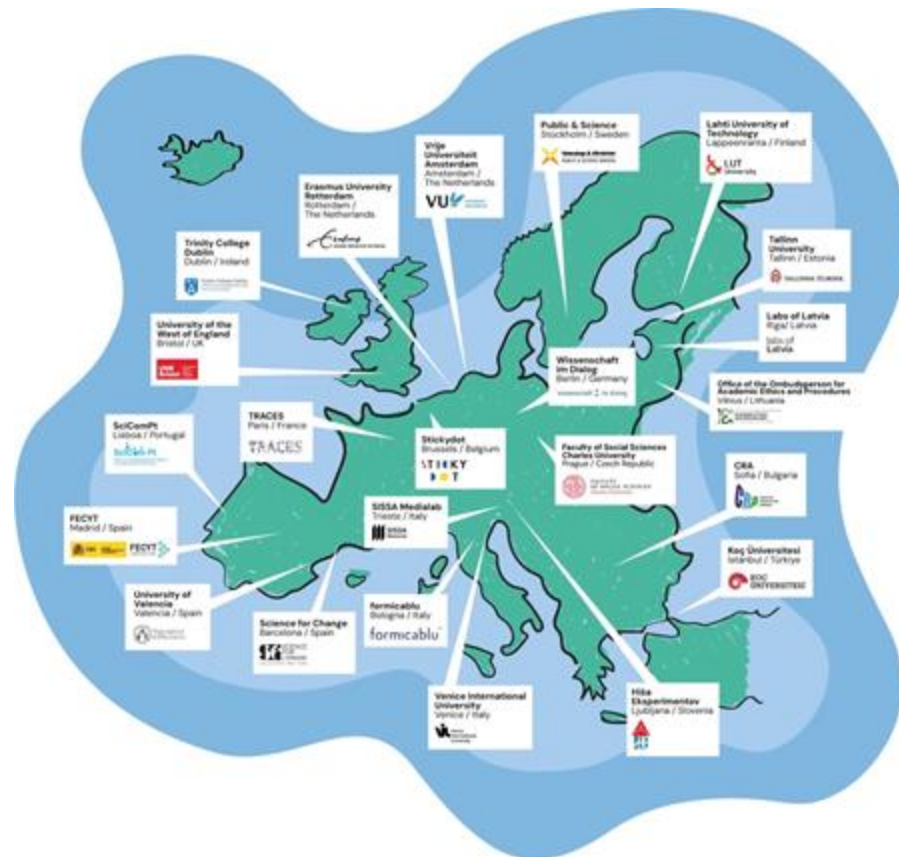


COALESCE HUBS

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

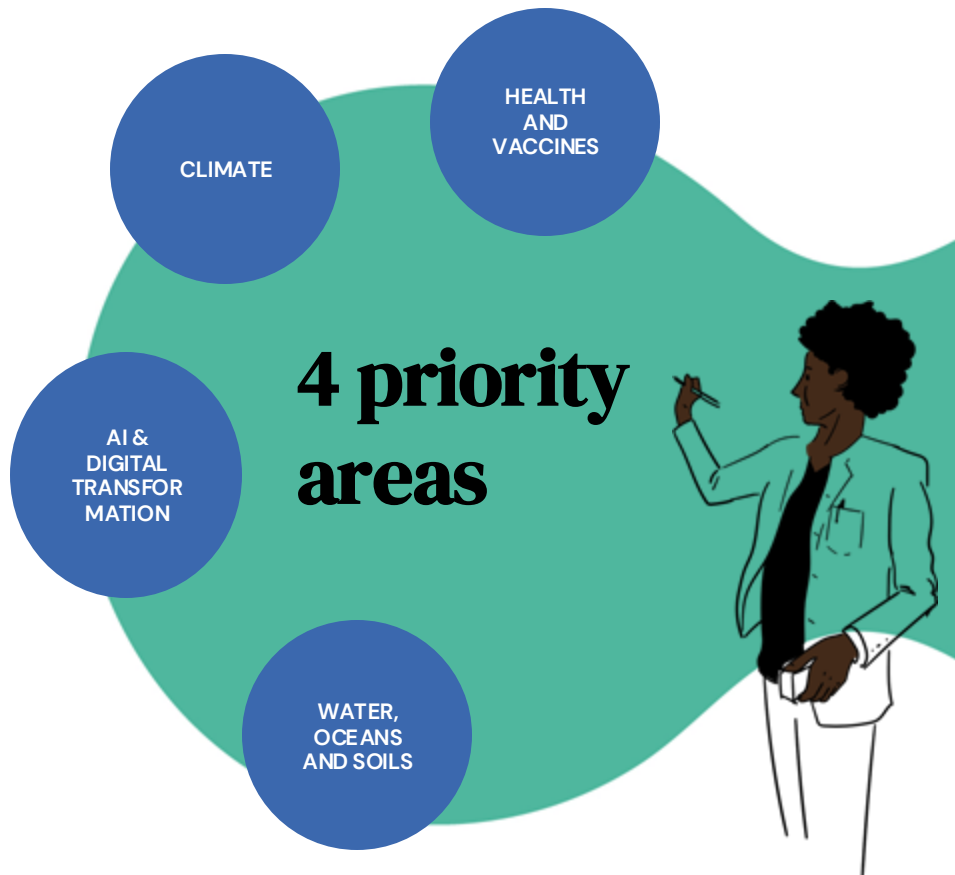


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Main goal

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.**



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

Disinformation – incorrect information distributed with the intention to deceive

Mika Baumeister, Unsplash



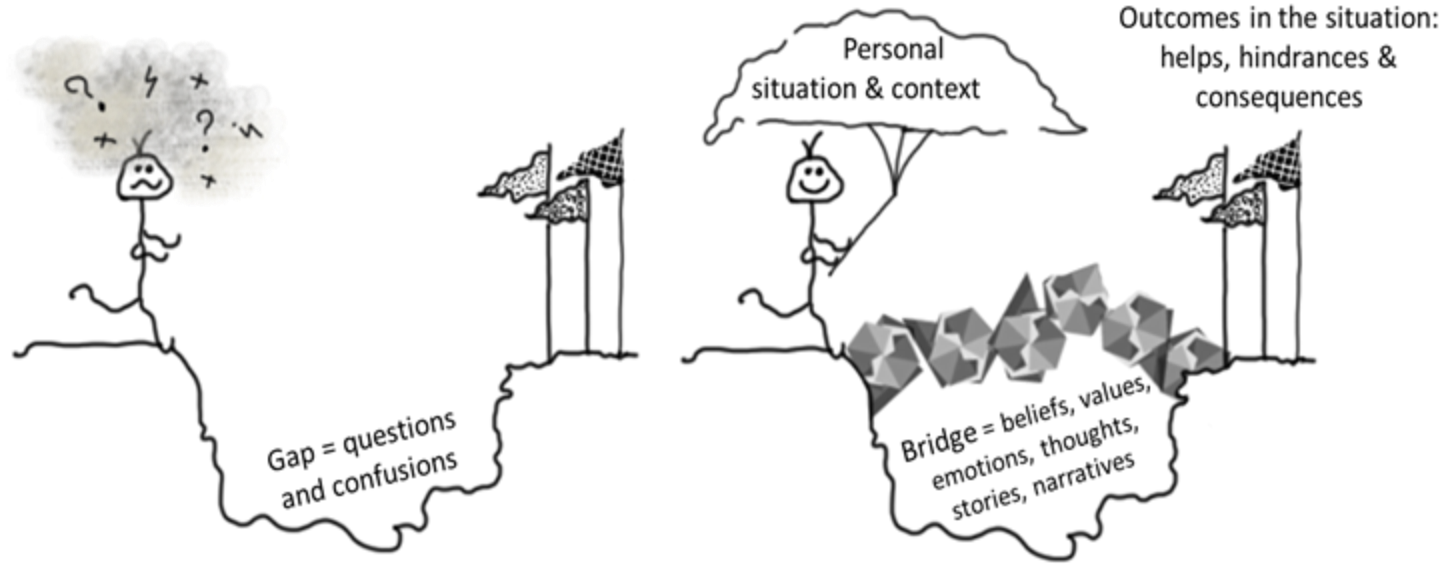
In today's session

Approaches to
make people less
susceptible to
misinformation

Approaches to
directly tackle
misinformation



Sensemaking practices and misinformation in Europe



Relevances & sources

reTHINK
#scicomm

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"



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"

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

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 Portugal] and a cluster don't [UK and Serbia] – including extreme views that the pandemic and containment measures were misused by governments to exert control.

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



Tackling misinformation

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

TACKLING MISINFORMATION

A COLLECTION OF RESEARCH
AND RESOURCES FOR SCIENCE
ENGAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

ADDRESSING THE SPREAD OF
INACCURATE INFORMATION
ABOUT SCIENCE AND
SCIENTISTS



Toolbox of interventions Conceptual toolbox Evidence toolbox Examples of interventions Map of evidence										
Toolbox: Conceptual overview										
This part of the online supplement is a digital toolbox in the form of a dynamic table that offers a conceptual overview of interventions. For useful links and other details click on the arrow or the "Expand" button to the left of the intervention type. To search through the whole table, use the search function below. Use the smaller search field under a column's header to search within that column. You can sort a column by clicking on its header, or sort multiple columns by holding the shift key while sorting.										
Click here to expand/collapse all rows										
Search										
Details	Intervention	Description	Example	Conceptual framework	Category	Problem	Targeted outcomes	Audience	Implementation	Scalability
▶ Expand		Accuracy prompts are used to shift people's attention to the concept of accuracy.	Asking people to evaluate the accuracy of a headline or showing people a video about the importance of sharing only accurate content.	Limited-attention utility model (Penneycook et al., 2021)	Nudge	Sharing false and misleading content	Behavior: thinking about accuracy before sharing information online	Social media users	Easy to implement. Can be implemented as a social media prompt (e.g., a pop-up asking the person to evaluate the accuracy of a headline or a short reminder about importance of accuracy before sharing).	3 - High in principle, scalability with context-specific adaptation

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

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

What can the Competence Centre do?

Follow COALESCE & the Competence Centre on social media



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THANK YOU

Join our community
of practice

