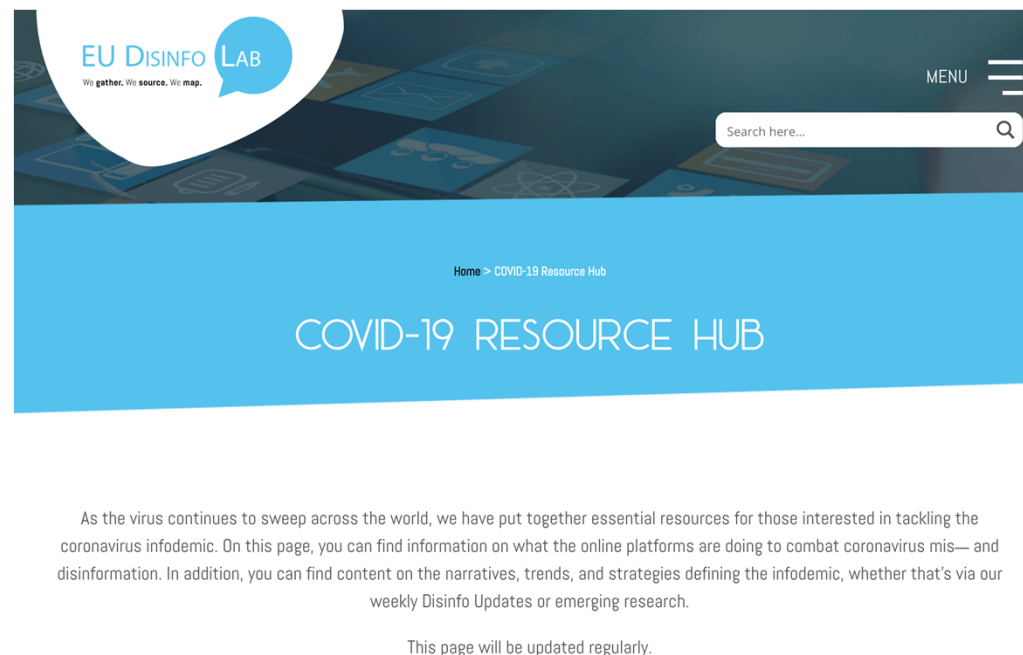

Disinformation and COVID-19: collect and distribute knowledge

WHO - 7 April 2020



Disinformation and COVID-19: What do we monitor?

- Analysis of the main trends (origin, narratives, tactics, platforms used, etc.).
- Comparisons with global trends observed by our partners and the main actors in the disinformation field.
- Monitoring of the platforms' responses to the COVID-19 crisis.
- List of resources and initiatives



Evolution of COVID-19 Disinformation



• “The outbreak in China”

- ✓ Focus on the situation in China
- ✓ International conspiracy theories
- ✓ Amplifying health fears
- ✓ False cures

• “The threat is getting closer”

- ✓ Uncertainty used to create panic
- ✓ False new coronavirus cases
- ✓ False new measures to counter the virus (e.g. the military is going to take over)
- ✓ False cures

• “The local disinformation storm”

- ✓ Local conspiracy theories
- ✓ Disinformation items linked to COVID-19 played on the existing divisions in European societies (political, social, identity...)
- ✓ Politization of the “cure question”
- ✓ Messages playing on “health fears” or advertising “false cures” continue to be massively shared.

Main tactics to spread disinformation on COVID19



- Heavy use of private messaging apps (WhatsApp, Messenger...) to spread disinformation items.
- Anonymous channels on Telegram share information linked to the COVID-19, which are then repropagated everywhere (Twitter, Facebook...).
- Adaptation of international disinformation items to local context & language, illustrating the globalization of disinformation → collaboration between factcheckers from different countries is vital.
- Impersonation of authoritative sources (media, doctors, authorities...) with imposter social media accounts, fake screenshots, fake official documents, and fake audio messages.
- Multiplication of decontextualized pictures and videos.
- Scientific debates are also used to spread disinformation items and conspiracy theories.
- Reorientation of a full ecosystem of disinformation actors towards this topic (clickbait websites, shady Twitter news accounts...).



Platforms' responses to COVID-19 mis- and disinformation

- Surfacing and prioritizing content from **authoritative sources**
- Closer cooperation with fact-checkers and health authorities in flagging this informative content in order to **proactively remove disinformation**
- **Automated** content moderation (leading to moderation mistakes and false positives)
- Offering free **advertising** to authorities
- Scams