EU RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORONAVIRUS DISINFORMATION

10 June 2020

A wave of myths, false claims and fake news swept the globe with the coronavirus outbreak, putting people in even more danger. The EU is acting against it on many fronts, including through research and innovation. Our scientists and innovators are doing vital work not only in the search for vaccines, treatments and diagnostics, but also for new methods and technologies to identify and debunk myths.

Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

Fight against coronavirus myths and false claims saves lives

Countering disinformation and debunking myths is at the forefront of the European Commission's fight against the coronavirus. The Commission is **countering the "infodemic"** with a constant outflow of fact-based information, reinforced communication tools and cooperation with online platforms.

In addition, a wide range of EU-funded research and innovation projects are already working to improve our understanding of disinformation and find tools to tackle it, and some are **specifically focusing on coronavirus-related disinformation**. Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, the current and the future EU Framework Programmes for research and innovation, offer even **more opportunities** for researchers and innovators to work on these important topics.
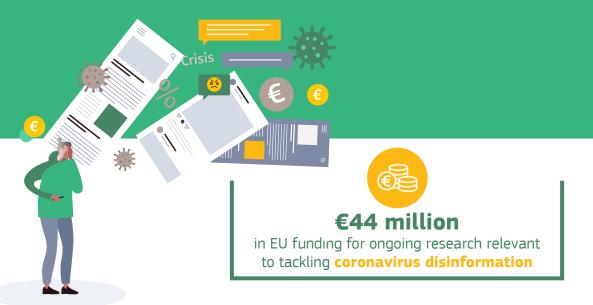
EU-funded research and innovation is needed to confront disinformation

Horizon 2020 (2014-2020) has already supported **160 beneficiaries with €44 million** in EU funding to work on projects relevant to confronting misinformation in the context of the pandemic. They mainly address fact-checking, capacity on disinformation and online accountability. The second call for expression of interest in response to the COVID-19 pandemic includes topics such as guidance to **prevent disinformation about health issues** and confinement, isolation and social distancing as well as the use of harmful self-medication and vaccine hesitancy.

The **#EUvsVirus Hackathon**, supported by the **European Innovation Council** pilot, has connected civil society, innovators, partners and investors across Europe to develop innovative solutions for coronavirus-related challenges, including on the challenge "Mitigating fake news spreading". Solutions under this challenge were invited to the "Matchathon" on 22-25 May to help mobilise financing.

Horizon Europe (2021-2027), will also support the fight against disinformation through its "Culture, creativity and inclusive society" cluster.

€44 million

in EU funding for ongoing research relevant to tackling **coronavirus disinformation**

EXAMPLES OF R&I PROJECTS FIGHTING DISINFORMATON

The objective of the **HERoS** project is to improve the efficiency of the response to the virus outbreak. It aims to help responders to public health emergencies make informed decisions. To this end, the project is developing a **new method for categorising and filtering information from social media to better counter coronavirus rumours and misinformation.**

Computational propaganda — through bots, botnets, and algorithms — has become one of the most concerning impacts of technology innovation. Political bots are already being deployed over social networks in Europe. The **COMPROP** project will put the best methods in social and computer science to work on the size of the problem and the possible solutions. It has been running **Coronavirus Misinformation Weekly Briefings.**

The **FARE** project addresses the spread of fake news by providing a theoretical framework for making testable predictions. The project will develop multidisciplinary research that advances our understanding of the decision-making process and the mistakes we have made on fake news, using experimental and computing techniques (big data and complexity systems).

The **GoodNews** project applies deep learning technology for the detection of fake news. It aims to build the technological capability for algorithmic fake news detection in social media using a novel paradigm. Instead of following the traditional approach of analyzing the news content, it will analyze the news spreading patterns in social networks. The algorithmic core of this project is based on a novel class of geometric deep learning algorithms developed in the **LEMAN** (Learning on Manifolds and Graphs) project.

The **Co-Inform** project is about empowering citizens, journalists, and policymakers with co-created socio-technical solutions, to increase resilience to misinformation, and to generate more informed behaviours and policies. The project has published results on **Misinformation and Covid-19** and its tools and platform will be made freely available and open sourced to maximize benefit and reuse.

The **QUEST** project, aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of science communication between scientists, general media and the public. It also covers **different aspects of quality science communication around the coronavirus crisis.**

Focussing on misinformation and digital safety, environmental health, and the automation and the future of skills and work, the **TRESCA** project is working on developing trust in science and innovation through innovating communication practices between scientific researchers, journalists and policy makers, has also analysed **basic digital sanitary practices to stop misinformation.**

The **SOMA** (Social Observatory for Disinformation and Social Media Analysis) project aims to address the reliability of information both in social and traditional media. The project will map European social media actors; establish a European centre for social media stakeholders undertaking research on disinformation; and, develop a Source Transparency Index to immediately verify sources. It is already gathering a significant number of **resources and analysis** around COVID-19 "infodemic" and disinformation threats.
It also aims to develop tools and instruments for the social media community.

More information :
Coronavirus research and innovation and
Coronavirus Response - Fighting Disinformation

#FactsMatter #EUvsDisinfo