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Atoms for Peace and Development

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CONFERENCE**

SENIOR SAFETY AND SECURITY REGULATORS' MEETING

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**Understanding the New Challenges of Mis-
and Disinformation: Setting the Scene**

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Outline

- **Introducing the current challenges of mis- and disinformation**
- **Key considerations for regulators**
- **Developing response strategies: Some recommendations and lessons learned from other areas**

Mis- and Disinformation



- **Disinformation** – false or misleading information, intended to result in harm or gaining profit.
- **Misinformation** – absence of a malicious intent.
- **A wide variety of types**, including:

fabricated content; manipulated content; imposter content; misleading content; false context; satire and parody; false connections; sponsored content; propaganda; error.

Mis- and Disinformation

Mis- and disinformation is not new, so what is different now and why should we care?

- **New digital platforms leading to the rise of media prosumers, combined with the speed and scale of information spread**
- **Breakdown of trust in the knowledge elites (authorities, experts) and diminishing role of traditional media gatekeepers**
- **Already in 2016, the Oxford English Dictionary announced *post-truth* as International Word of the Year**
- **Experience of Covid-19 and the ‘infodemic’ that accompanied it**
- **Disinformation on nuclear issues supercharged by the new technologies can be very damaging, with far-reaching real-world consequences. Furthermore, nuclear sector has a history of negative public perceptions.**

Heat denial: influencers question validity of high temperatures

Tweet viewed millions of times claimed ground temperature was being confused with air temperature

**David Hambling
and Helena
Horton**

Thu 7 Sep 2023 10.09
BST



📷 A thermometer in Toulouse, France, reads 45C on 23 August. Photograph: Alain Pitton/NurPhoto/Shutterstock



HM Government

Have you noticed your health declining since receiving the Covid-19 injection?

If you weren't made fully aware of the health risks from the Covid 19-vaccines, you are entitled to compensation of £120,000



GOV.UK

www.gov.uk/vaccine-damage-payment



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Example of Covid disinformation from the UNICRI 2023 Handbook to combat CBRN disinformation.

Source: AFP Fact Check (2022, 23 May). UK gov't rejects fake Covid vaccine injury poster shared on Facebook. AFP Fact Check. Available on the Internet.

Mis- and Disinformation (cont'd)

The rise of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** has also given rise to the so-called ‘**synthetic media**’, involving:

“artificial production, manipulation and modification of data and multimedia by automated means, especially AI algorithms, to mislead or change original meaning.”

(UNHCR, 2022).



Key considerations for regulators

Information overload (proliferation of information and the limited attention span) alone leads to the loss of the quality information.

Cognitive biases further augment the impact of the mis- and disinformation (e.g., confirmation bias; negativity bias; popularity bias), as does highly charged, emotive content.

Corrections can be useful, but proactive monitoring and communications are key.

Key considerations for the regulators (cont'd)

- **A broader issue of trust/(dis)trust is of paramount importance.**

“[T]rust in the communicating institutions is a central – if not the central – feature of communication success” (European Parliament, 2023:8)

- **In light of real-world implications for health, human rights and democracy, these challenges cannot be addressed by any actor in isolation; building broader partnerships with different stakeholders via coordinated and multifaceted efforts is the only viable path forward.**

Developing response strategies

Lessons learned from successful information and education campaigns during the COVID-19 pandemic, e.g.:

- ***Transparency, Communication and Trust: The Role of Public Communication in Responding to the Wave of Disinformation about the Coronavirus*** (OECD, 2020);
- ***The effect of communication and disinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic*** (European Parliament, 2023).

Developing response strategies (cont'd)

providing clearer, more definitive information through official channels and established media outlets;

ensuring consistency, even if information is tentative;

maintaining transparent communication;

“pre-bunking”, or warning, about potential disinformation before it OCCURS (OECD, 2020)



TACKLING CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):
CONTRIBUTING TO A GLOBAL EFFORT
oecd.org/coronavirus



**Transparency, communication and trust:
The role of public communication in
responding to the wave of disinformation
about the new coronavirus**

Developing response strategies (cont'd)

adopting a positive tone supporting citizen confidence in taking action and communicating engagement and responsiveness;

taking into account an overall citizen preference for transparency;

using two-way communication/citizen engagement

tailoring the messages for different demographics' information needs and attitudes (European Parliament, 2023).

Developing response strategies (cont'd)

- States should ensure public officials share accurate information and hold accountable authorities who spread false information;
- States should involve civil society in the design of policies and other efforts aimed at countering disinformation.

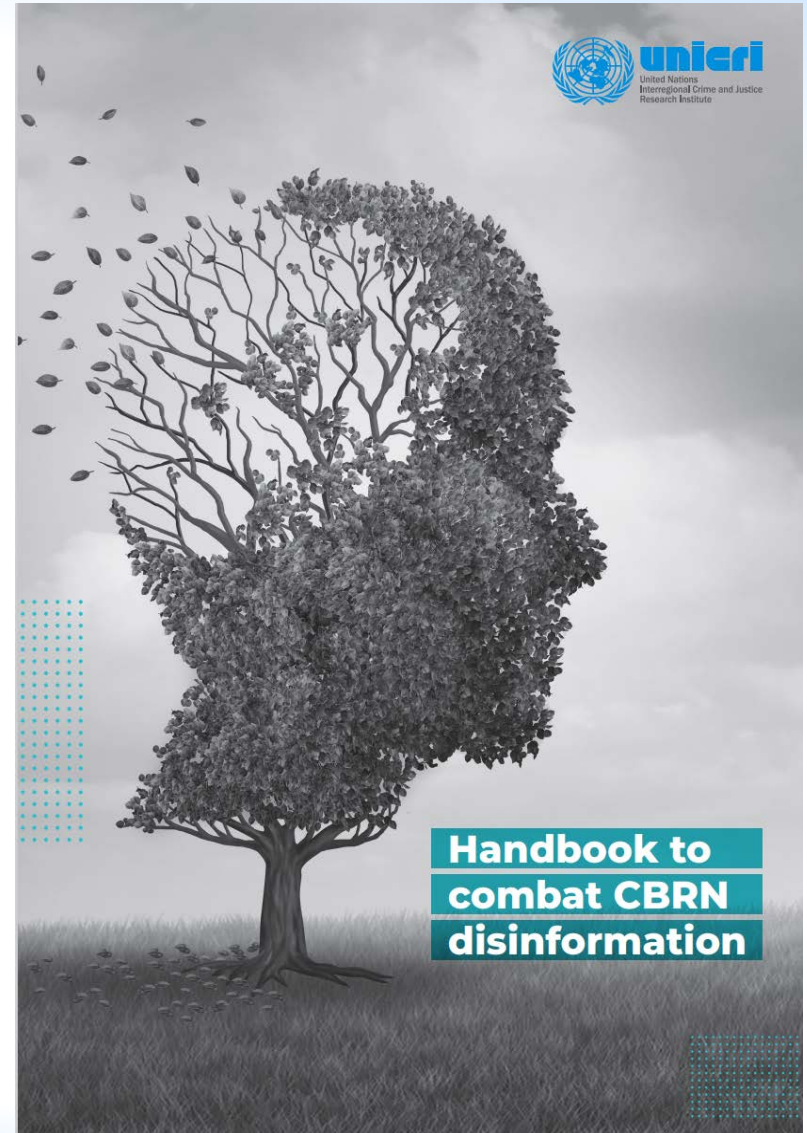
Countering Disinformation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

Report of the Secretary-General

Developing response strategies (cont'd)

Many examples of actual instances of disinformation plus detailed advice on debunking steps, considerations involved and examples of debunking efforts.

- **To avoid the backfire effect, it is important focus on the facts rather than the myths surrounding them.**
- **Debunking should be audience-tailored and platform-specific.**



Developing response strategies (cont'd)

Aspects to consider when pre-bunking and de-bunking a false claim (UNICRI, 2023)





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Thank you!

