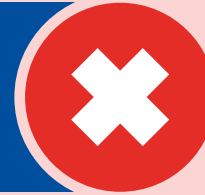


MEPs' Response to Disinformation: Practical Guidelines¹

DON'Ts



Engage directly with the spreaders of disinformation e.g. on social media

This can provoke even more attacks.

Repeat the disinformation content ('the myth') before providing the correct information

This might be deliberately misused as a confirmation of the disinformation provided.

Rush to reply in the event of negative attacks

Carefully plan the next steps by designing credible, well-documented responses.

Mention directly the disinformation message/name of the spreader

when it is not necessary.

Be afraid to debunk disinformation

Debunking will not typically cause a backfire effect, except in limited circumstances when people's worldviews are challenged.

DOs



Warn people that they might be misinformed

Preventing disinformation from taking root helps to discredit it later.

Decide whether to respond

Some fake stories are insignificant or have low exposure and can be ignored.

Keep it simple and use plain language

Your audience might not understand the specific field or spend little time reading your message.

Explain why the disinformation is incorrect

This is more effective than simply labelling it as false.

Respond on your channels with a neutral tone, focusing on the accurate information

Avoid direct contact with the spreaders.

Partner with trusted organisations/ personalities and amplify your response via their channels

When similar information comes from multiple sources, it has a higher chance of being seen and trusted.

Use alert verification/ fact-checking platforms.

Use disinformation detection tools to track mentions of any given term or topic

These tools can also help identify supporters who have influence in their online communities.

Train local professional news outlets in best practices for searching for official statistics and factchecking before publishing stories.

¹ The material is based on *The Debunking Handbook 2020*, the *Rules of engagement for handling disinformation* and *Arizona State University* source.