

# Handling Disinformation

A common approach by ESS NSIs

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# 1. Incidents

<https://youtu.be/bw5ldWr9QD0?t=659>



UNECE

# Fundamental principles of official statistics

Official statistics - reliable and objective information - is crucial for decision making

Highest standards of impartiality, scientific principles, professional methods

*The statistical agencies are entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics.*



## ESS STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Taskforce subgroup 'handling disinformation'



# What is disinformation?

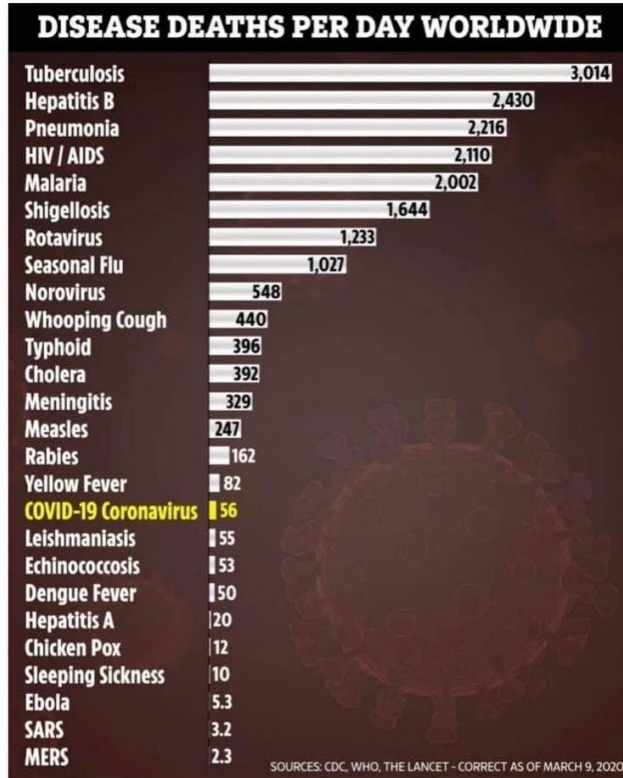
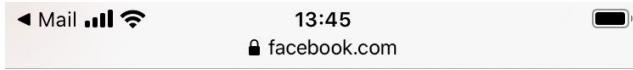
*Disinformation is non-factual or demonstrably untrue or wrong information that is spread in public debate. This information has the intent to mislead or is being presented as a 'truth untold by mainstream media'. The information presented can be contradicted with official statistics and facts provided by the statistical office.*

Take care: don't call it 'Fake News'

=> Too polemic, makes you part of public debate



# Covid-19 enters, disinformation starts



US, Eur, March 2020

Randall Bresee ▶ Let America Work! April 30 at 11:45 PM · 🌐

So explain to me again why they shut down the whole world for number 17 on the list.



# Covid-19 enters, disinformation starts

## DÉCÈS DANS LE MONDE DU 1ER JANVIER AU 30 MARS 2020

14.489.315 DONT :

36.272 CORONAVIRUS  
119.758 GRIPPE SAISONNIÈRE  
241.625 MALARIA  
264.158 SUICIDES  
332.529 ACCIDENTS (ROUTE)  
616.108 ALCOOL  
1.231.436 TABAC  
2.023.119 CANCER  
2.755.098 FAIM



**Yania Dombrowsky**  
6 avril · 🌐

Bonjour à tous  
Il faut cesser d'avoir peur!  
Regardez les chiffres et détendez vous!  
Ne vous laissez plus manipuler par tous les  
stratégies qui font leur miel de vos peurs!

👍👎🗨️ 101 100 commentaires  
4,5 K partagés

Partager

Voir les commentaires précédents 8 sur

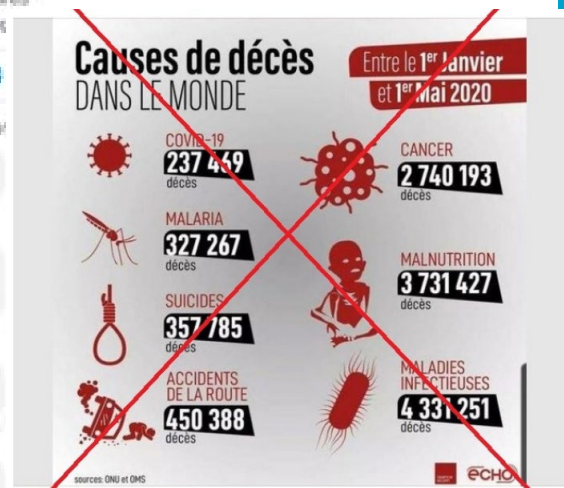
**Nicolas Chapuis** Ces chiffres sont faux, attention  
5 |

**MH Lily** Chiffres inexacts. Il y a 87729 morts du covid dans le monde depuis janvier !  
5 |

**Grégory Huber** Ça s'arrête au 30 mars ? Pourquoi ?  
5 |

**Dams Raynes** 🤔🤔  
[https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/.../app editor/index.html...](https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/.../app/editor/index.html...)

France, March 2020





# Covid-19 enters, disinformation starts

Spain, June 2020

*“In Spain they continue to tell us about 27,000 deaths from coronavirus, it really is 50,000, is someone going to take responsibility?”*



Rocio Monasterio ✓

@monasterioR



En España nos siguen hablando de 27.000 muertos por coronavirus, realmente son 50.000 ¿alguién va a asumir responsabilidades?



Cae el ministro de Salud de Chile en medio de una disputa por las cifras de mue... Chile ha dado este sábado un golpe de timón en su lucha contra la Covid-19, que está afectando al país con especial saña: Jaime Mañalich deja el Ministerio de ...

[🔗 elmundo.es](https://www.elmundo.es)

# Covid-19 disinformation



**Sputnik V** @sputnikvaccine · 23 apr. ...

BREAKING: #SputnikV study shows that there are significantly more deaths following vaccination with Pfizer than with AstraZeneca vaccine per 1mn administered doses, based on official publicly available data by 13 international health regulators.

## Significantly more deaths were registered after vaccination with Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA vaccine compared to AstraZeneca and other COVID-19 jabs

Based on publicly available official data on deaths per mln doses administered from 13 countries (as of April 19, 2021):  
India, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, USA, France, Germany, UK, Austria, Italy, Norway, Denmark, Russia

VACCINE	NUMBER OF REGISTERED DEATHS AMONG PEOPLE WHO RECEIVED AT LEAST ONE DOSE OF VACCINE PER 1 MLN ADMINISTERED DOSES	
	AVERAGE OF 13 COUNTRIES INDIVIDUAL DEATH RATES	SIMPLE WEIGHTED AVERAGE (BY # OF ADMINISTERED DOSES)
Pfizer/BioNTech	39.4	16.0
Moderna	20.2	13.6
AstraZeneca	12.8	8.8
Johnson & Johnson	7.5	7.5
Sputnik V	2.0	3.7

Important notes:  
(1) Data includes all reported deaths (with and without vaccine SAE trigger suspicion), including caused by COVID-19  
(2) No clear link between vaccinations and deaths has been found to date  
\*total reported death divided by total administered doses for 13 countries

216 1,2K 1,4K



**Sputnik V** @sputnikvaccine · 23 apr. ...

The causes of such major discrepancies in the number of death cases among different vaccines should be the focus of honest scientific and public discussion.

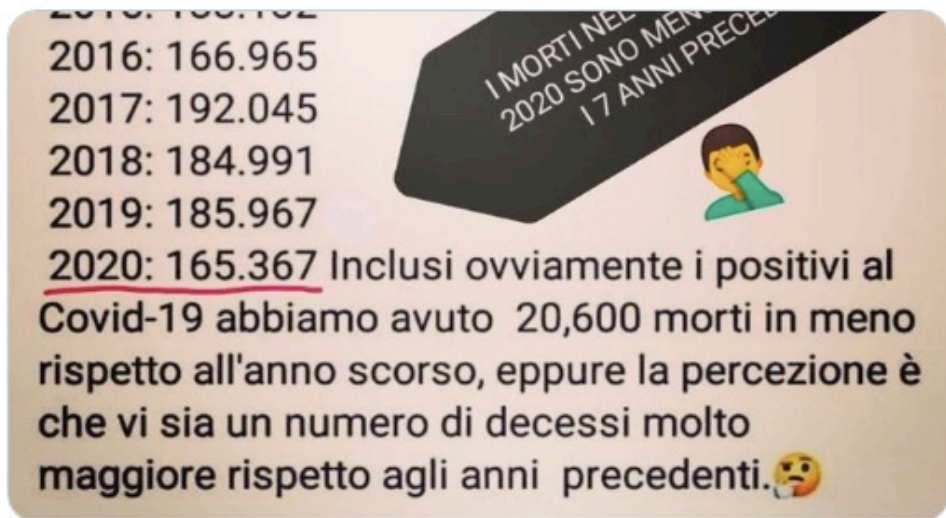
7 66 236

## World wide, April 2021





Si, ci sta, ma sempre senza esagerare ...  
Vedi dati ISTAT verificabili sul loro sito 😊



## Italy, dec 2020

*Claiming excess mortality in 2020 was 20,600 lower than previous year*

# “virus truth.nl” Claim: mortality during Covid-crisis is not higher



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live stream

## Mortality over 80s

**Table 1: Risk of death from COVID-19 by age group in the period February-March 2021**

Leeftijdsgroep (in jaren)	Risico op sterfte door COVID-19 (aantal per 100.000 personen)
20-29	0,0
30-39	0,2
40-49	0,4
50-59	2,3
60-69	8,8
70-79	36,1
80+	165,7

De gegevens afkomstig van het RIVM. Van zeer zeldzaam positief geteste personen die getest zijn aan de dood is bekend of zij zijn overleden. Dit komt doordat er geen meldingsplicht is voor overlijden bij personen met een positieve testuitslag. De hier gepresenteerde data betreffen daarom een onderrapportage.

Table 1 shows how many people died in the period February-March 2021 from confirmed COVID-19 per 100,000 people in different age groups. A confirmed COVID-19 death: someone who tests positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus at the time of death (COVID-19 does not necessarily have to be the direct cause of death). In the 80+ category, the mortality rate is 165.7 per 100,000 people. In 2021 there will 840,000 people aged 80 or older in the Netherlands. So in the 80+ d be about 1392 confirmed COVID-19 deaths.

Sign up for the newsletter

Help!

Go quickly to

1.5xbetter.nu

A crisis in science, lockdown is a disgrace. Willem Engel and Ramon Brill



Podcast Radio 2: The corona policy filleted by Willem Engel



## Other disinformation incidents in 2020/21:

- Labour statistics challenged: Greece, Poland
- Use of mobile network provider's data, claiming severe privacy issues: Spain, Ireland, the Netherlands
- Income growth data challenged: the Netherlands

## 2. Measures

*Strategy developed by Eurostat ESS taskforce members*

1. Identify, monitor, verify disinformation
  - tracking tools
  - social media monitoring tools
2. Incidents repository *live document, growing*
3. Learnings: tried and tested response practices *what worked, what didn't*
4. Rules of engagement: general advice how to handle/tackle disinformation



# Starting point: NSIs vulnerability

- Do not engage directly with the propagators of disinformation
- Do not get involved in polemic public debates



# Monitoring tools

Google Fact Check Explorer	Google	All	<a href="https://toolbox.google.com/factcheck/explorer">https://toolbox.google.com/factcheck/explorer</a>
Global disinformation indeks	Veracity.ai	News outlets	<a href="https://disinformationindex.org/">https://disinformationindex.org/</a>
Hoaxy	Indiana University Bloomington	Twitter, online articles	<a href="https://hoaxy.osome.iu.edu/">https://hoaxy.osome.iu.edu/</a>
BotSlayer	Indiana University Bloomington	Twitter	<a href="https://osome.iu.edu/tools/botslayer">https://osome.iu.edu/tools/botslayer</a>
Botometer	Indiana University Bloomington	Twitter	<a href="https://botometer.osome.iu.edu/">https://botometer.osome.iu.edu/</a>
Twitter twXplorer	Northwestern University	Twitter	<a href="https://twxplorer.knightlab.com/">https://twxplorer.knightlab.com/</a>
Iffy Quotient	Michigan University	news and information sites	<a href="https://csmr.umich.edu/projects/iffy-quotient/">https://csmr.umich.edu/projects/iffy-quotient/</a>
CrowdTangle	Facebook	Facebook, Instagram and Reddit	<a href="https://www.crowdtangle.com/">https://www.crowdtangle.com/</a>



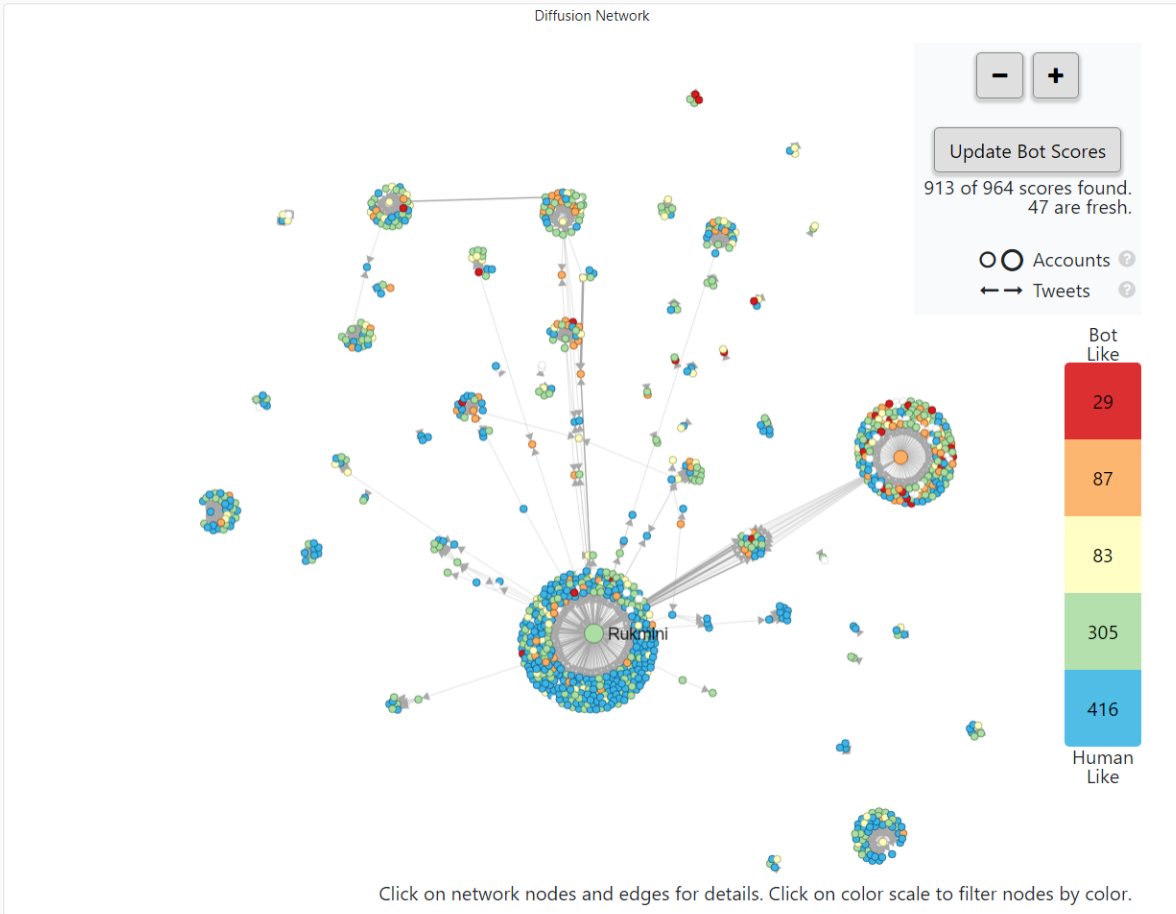
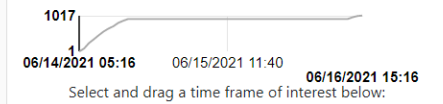
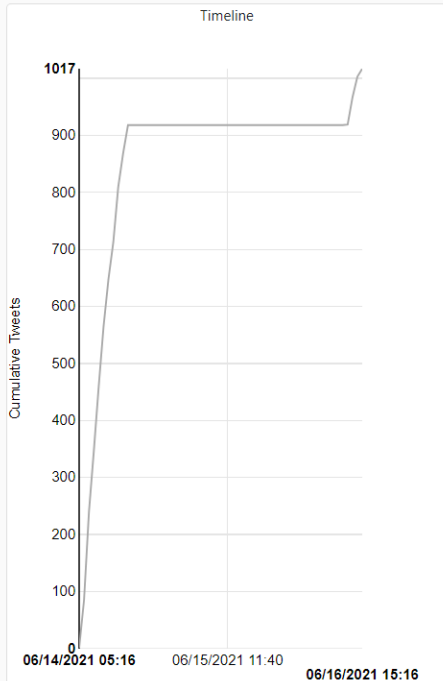


Live Search

Article Search

excess mortality

Search



# Factchecking, investigative journalism tools

Snopes	Snopes Media Group	Fact checking	<a href="https://www.snopes.com/">https://www.snopes.com/</a>
Efe Verifica	Agencia EFE (news wire)	Fact checking	<a href="https://www.efe.com/efe/espana/efeverifica/">https://www.efe.com/efe/espana/efeverifica/</a>
Factuel	Agence France-Presse (AFP) news wire	Fact checking	<a href="https://factuel.afp.com/">https://factuel.afp.com/</a>
NewsGuard	NewsGuard Technologies	news and information websites	<a href="https://www.newsguardtech.com/">https://www.newsguardtech.com/</a>
DROG	Self-owned	Online social media & web platforms	<a href="https://drog.group/">https://drog.group/</a>
Trollrensics	Self-owned, gov. sponsored (Dutch)	Online social media & web platforms	<a href="https://www.trollrensics.com/">https://www.trollrensics.com/</a>
European Digital Media Observatory	European University Institute Florence with partnerships	Online overview, repositories, activities	<a href="https://edmo.eu">https://edmo.eu</a>

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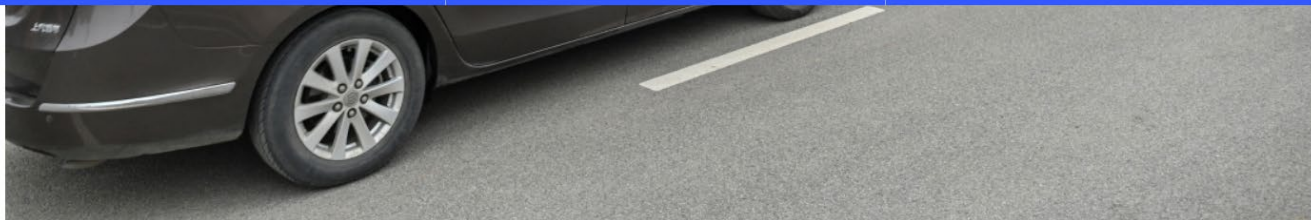
United against disinformation



A LA UNE

REGIONS

RUBRIQUES



## Le virus du Covid-19 issu du laboratoire de Wuhan ? Pas si simple

Mis à jour le 14/06/2021 à 16:54



## Euro : Non, le malaise de Christian Eriksen n'a pas été causé par le vaccin contre le Covid-19

Mis à jour le 15/06/2021 à 15:00



## Covid-19 : retrouvez ici tous nos articles de vérification

# Lessons from NSI incidents: what didn't work

- **Engaging directly** with the spreaders of disinformation
- In a NSI message targeted to the source of disinformation, **repeating the disinformation content**, like 'the myth' (and naming it as such), before providing the right information and correct data.

# Lessons from NSI incidents: what did work

Among other lessons:

- Responding immediately (in own channels)
- Responding via partners/ambassadors in your network
- Tell the truth first!
- Empower employees to act as ambassadors (experts)
- Build partnerships to handle disinformation
- Build partnerships to educate the public
- Encourage journalists to build trust by providing readers with background information to their stories



# Actions from DG COMM (EU)

## *Directorate-General for Communication of the European Commission*

- Recommendation: improve detection, analysis and exposure of disinformation
- Set-up of a Rapid Alert System
- Implementation of EU-wide Code of Practice on Disinformation
- Targeted campaigns in Europe and beyond





# Voorbeeld

Wat is **oversterfte** en was 2020 een opmerkelijk **sterftejaar**?





# Conclusions

- Be active, but keep distance
  - Monitor, track, do research
  - But tools&skills are not enough: capacity is needed!
- => hands, people, fte!





**Facts that matter**