

Disinfo Dictionary

A dictionary of Myths and Truths

Fellas & Partners

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Welcome

A fine line separates lies from the truth in the past, but in the future there is no longer any line.

— Lesja Ukrainka, Cassandra (1907)

The **Disinfo Dictionary** is a well-organized, searchable and linkable online resource that debunks chronic Russian narratives with selected facts about Russia's war on Ukraine. Disinfo Dictionary is aimed at different target groups: It is a time-saver for journalists, fact-checkers, disinfo activists, social network users and all citizens seeking reliable information about Russia and Ukraine. Disinfo Dictionary is both a web dictionary for searching and reference and a structured book that can be read from start to finish. It can be read online, on a smartphone, or downloaded as a pdf or epub; with a screen reader, the epub serves as an audio book. Disinfo Dictionary is bilingual (German/English), free open source, expandable and fills a gap between the [EUvsDisinfo database](#) of the EU diplomatic service and Wikipedia.

We hope that the Disinfo Dictionary will help to reduce Russia's rampant propaganda about its war in Ukraine and thus contribute to a more resilient society and security in Europe. **read. share. join.**

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Part A

Intro

Preface

It could be you: who benefits from quick search, easy read and simple links to the Disinfo Dictionary

For whom?

The lexicon allows you to quickly search for and link to fakes that refute Russian narratives.

- Journalists
- Fact checkers
- Disinformation activists
- users of social networks
- all citizens looking for reliable information about Russia and Ukraine

What?

This lexicon consolidates chronic lie narratives that have been refuted by several fact-checking organizations.

Preface

It is available in English and German. It can be read on the internet or downloaded as a PDF or epub, the latter can be read aloud by a screen-reader.

The encyclopedia is organized by subject area with one or more chapters with one or more sections.

The quality of the content is monitored by our partners, see in the appendix under [Team & Partners](#).

Why?

A hallmark of propaganda is its ability to blur the lines between fact and fiction and confuse the distinction between truth and lies

Quote from Dierickx and Lindén (2024) who have analyzed various challenges and contexts that fact checkers face. We have also extended this to citizens fighting disinformation:


- Knowing or finding the facts
- Know or recognize sources and patterns of propaganda
- decipher the truth in any specific context
- find the truth quickly
- quickly refute the lies (late arriving comments lack visibility)¹
- Scaling rectification to the industrial scale of disinformation dissemination
- Scaling rectification and outreach against algorithmic bias or even censorship on social networks
- Scaling rectification across different social networks despite proprietary content management

¹NAFO solves this by posting graphic memes, which is very quick but can be more easily defamed as non-fact-based. Using memes tends to escalate and prolong discussions and tie up capacity; providing facts tends to silence trolls

How?

How?

The *Disinformation Dictionary* addresses these challenges somewhat by

- providing curated truths in the context of the russian war in Ukraine
- teaching about propaganda patterns
- linking to officially diagnosed and debunked disinfo at 
- finding truth fast via keyword navigation and search function
- debunking the lies fast by linking or copy-pasting the truths
- fast implies higher throughput and therefore better scaling²
- (against algorithmic biases only regulation helps, that enforces transparency and fairness)
- works uniformly in all social networks³

Logo?

If you are wondering about our logo, it is derived from this



Figure 1: DisinfoDict logo

and finally is

²although disinfo scaling is much cheaper unless regulation enforces algorithmic countermeasures

³except for algorithmic dampening of reach when using external links

Preface



Figure 2: DifD Logo

Values & Principles

Trust us, help us and help you: values and principles, mission and vision, learn good writing!



Myth

There is no room for *Values & Principles*, we must be *realistic*.



Truth

Values & Principles are the basis for civilization, and they *shape our reality*.

Our mission

Providing easily accessible and linkable truthful information, correcting widespread disinformation narratives.

Our vision

To become a trusted, useful reference for correcting narratives, helping to reduce the corrosive influence of disinformation on our free, peaceful and democratic coexistence.

Our values

- we promote honesty and democracy
- we keep the dictionary concise and correct
- we keep the dictionary simple and sustainable

Our target group

The Desinfo-Dictionary is for people

- who have little time or are not used to reading long texts
- who prefer reliable information over convenient or sensational lies
- who need reliable quotes, links or sources

Our principles

- we focus on the truth, not lies (the more people consume lies, the more they believe them)
- we are committed to the [IFCN Code of Principles](#) (see below)
- we write our texts ourselves or use [CC](#) sources; in the context of fair use, we quote texts under copyright only in short excerpts and with reference to the source.

- anyone who subscribes to these values and principles can make a contribution (see [Contribute](#) below)
- if you find an error, please notify us with a suggested correction and source at [correction \[at\] disinfodict \[dot\] org](mailto:correction@disinfodict.org)
- if you believe we are infringing your copyright please notify us with proof at [copyright \[at\] disinfodict \[dot\] org](mailto:copyright@disinfodict.org)

IFCN code of Principles

1. a commitment to Non-partisanship and Fairness
2. a commitment to Standards and Transparency of Source
3. a commitment to Transparency of Funding & Organization
4. a commitment to Standards and Transparency of Methodology
5. a commitment to an Open & Honest Corrections Policy

Basic principles

- we write the dictionary in simple [markdown language](#)
- we keep the dictionary source version controlled on [github](#)
- we publish the dictionary under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International](#) license:
 - **CC**: Creative Commons license - guarantees that the content survives in the public domain
 - **BY**: credit must be given to the creator - transparency and appreciation
 - **NC**: only Non-Commercial uses of the work are permitted - we don't want people to pay for something that is freely available
 - **ND**: No Derivatives or adaptations of the work are permitted - prevents tampering with the holy truth of the content

Authoring principles

Readability

We try to keep the dictionary readable like a book. This implies that we try to avoid repeating content and rather prefer to cross-reference to the part/chapter/section which most suitably hosts this content.

Parts


The dictionary is divided thematically into parts. The parts are separate folders on Github and the names of the parts are displayed in the navigation at the top level of the dictionary (left).

- Folder names may not be renamed (they are part of the permanent references)
- Navigation names of parts can be renamed in file `_quarto.yml`
- and the sequence of the chapters in the navigation can be changed in `_quarto.yml`

Chapters

A part consists of chapter `*.qmd` files, chapter titles are shown second-level dictionary navigation (left side).

- filenames must be unique within their folder, e.g. `intro/principles.qmd`
- the folders and filenames serve as target for html links, e.g. `https://disinfodict/intro/principles`
- a chapter has a title, e.g. `# Intro | Principles` (visible in navigation)
- followed by a cross-reference target derived from the filename, e.g. `{#sec-intro-principles}` which can be referenced by `@sec-intro-principles` (always english and never changed)


- files must not be put into a different part (file locations are part of permanent references)
- file names must not be changed (they are part of permanent references)
- but chapter titles can be changed improving appearance and navigation, e.g. # Values & Principles
- and the sequence of the chapters in the navigation can be changed in `_quarto.yml`
- a chapter begins with one-sentence disinformation only in a callout-caution ('Myth'). If possible, we list contradictory propaganda lies. - immediately followed by a one- or two-sentence callout-tip ('Truth')
- The EUvsDisinfo icon  links to a keyword search on euvsdisinfo.eu

Sections

Chapters are organized in *fact-sections*:

- with concise fact headers shown in the chapter navigation (right side)
- that can be read as a quick storyline
- fact-sections expand their header with explanations and sources
- the sequence of fact-sections can be changed
- section headers can, but should not be changed (breaks links to `<partfoldername>/<chapterfilename>#<sectiontitle>`)

Translations

- a chapter can be written in English or German first
- we strive to offer all chapters in all supported languages (see the globe  language selector in the upper left corner)
- we never use machine translation without checking and correcting and we use the high-quality translator from [deepl](https://www.deepl.com/)

Values & Principles

- we only translate into languages we speak well, and if we are not native speakers, we use [deepl](#) back-translations to check the meaning
- without translations our technology falls back to english

Style guide

Pyramid principle

We don't write towards a punch line, but start with the core statement or statements and then elaborate on this. Many people don't read to the end, so the most important things have to come first. E.g. in [?@sec-culture-russia](#):

"Truth"

- Russia is killing the culture in its colonies and appropriating the culture of its invaded neighbors.
- Russia's true culture is corruption and lies, violence and fear.

At the next level, the section headings then form a line of argument (or simply enumeration) of the arguments, which are then further explained and substantiated in the sections.

No false balance

We want to counter Russian lies with truths. We don't want to be balanced. There is enough false balance. Take the culture section, for example. Wikipedia would simply list the most important examples of Russian and Ukrainian culture. We are not Wikipedia. We have two chapters, one

on the supposedly "Great" Russian culture and one on the supposedly inferior or non-existent Ukrainian culture. We counter these Russian lies, on the one hand, with wonderful examples of Ukrainian culture (and this chapter should be quite long). On the other hand, we deconstruct the fairy tale of the "Great Russian Culture" by showing that Russian culture is a fake giant because

- Russia is murdering the culture of Ukraine (and other colonies)
- Russia appropriates the culture of Ukraine (and other colonies)
- an alleged highlight of Russian culture, the Russian "national poet" Pushkin was in reality a Russian imperial poet, who partly operated with fascist imagery, and could not be more different from the freedom-loving Ukrainian national poets.

Sustainability principles

- we prefer quotes from sustainable sources such as books, journals
- we use links that we expect to work for long (dead links harm search engine visibility)
- we prefer tables over pictures
- we use data based charts or other executed R-code only if absolutely necessary
- we use pictures only if absolutely necessary (pictures cause network traffic, consume energy and emit CO₂)
- we minimize picture size (svg or png or jpg, $\leq 1280 \times 1280$ Pixel and reasonably compressed)
- we prefer square pictures, and prefer 3:4 resp. 4:3 over 9:16 and 16:9

Contribute

You can send plaintext suggestions for improvements, we do not accept binary files for security reasons. Please use the [quarto markdown](#) .qmd fileformat and send to [contribute \[at\] disinfodict \[dot\] org](mailto:contribute@disinfodict.org). The qmd syntax for defining section headers, footnotes and integrate pictures is simple, see for example the *part brothers | chapter russia* in the dictionary and [on github](#). There is also a [mini demo dictionary](#) for learning.

For an overview which chapters still require work see status. By submitting content, you accept the [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#) license. To avoid duplicate work, join our signal group and announce which chapter you are working on. To join, send your signal handle (or your mobile number) to [contribute \[at\] disinfodict \[dot\] org](mailto:contribute@disinfodict.org). Joining the group is invitation-only.

For multiple contributions you can fork the [dictionary at github](#) and create a pull-request (see the [README](#)).

Terms & Techniques

Become an expert: (Dis)Information Terminology and Propaganda Techniques



Myth

There is no such thing like Truth.



Truth

Propaganda tries to destroy our sense of truth and tries to mislead us in the interest of others.

Truth

The reason we focus on truths, not lies, we mark lies as such, and we immediately follow up lies with a short corrective truth, is this:

As Gilbert writes, human minds, "when faced with shortages of time, energy, or conclusive evidence, may fail to unaccept the ideas that they involuntarily accept during comprehension."

[Trump's Lies vs. Your Brain](#)

Terms & Techniques

In order to understand a lie, we need to have it in our short-term memory for a moment, if we get distracted before recognizing it as a lie, e.g. by the next lie, we risk to store a stream of lies in our long-term memory. This is the reason, Propagandists like Donald Trump or Sahra Wagenknecht spill out a rapid stream of lies.

Desinformation

Misinformation is incorrect or misleading information (see [Wikipedia](#)).

Malinformation is correct information deliberately spread with malign intent (see [Wikipedia](#)).

Disinformation is misinformation deliberately spread to deceive people (see [Wikipedia](#) and [German Government](#)).

TYPES OF INFORMATION DISORDER

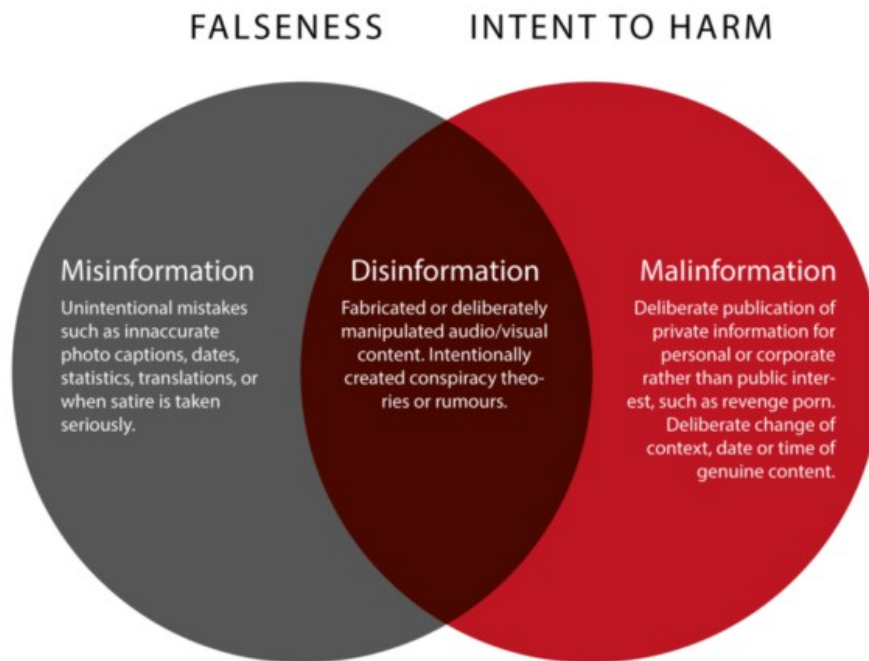


Figure 3: Malinformation, Misinformation, Disinformation. Source: [Claire Wardle & Hossein Derakshan, 2017](#)

Disinformation can be information that is

- **isolated:** out of context
- **framed:** put into different context
- **manipulated:** e.g. tampered pictures
- **invented:** completely made up, e.g. prompted AI

Terms & Techniques

Arguably the longest lasting disinformation was likely planted by the Czarist secret service Ochrana: "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" - a deeply antisemitic pamphlet that is very popular among the far-right, parts of the far-left and islamists until today.

In Soviet times "Operation Denver" was launched in which the USSR spread the rumor that AIDS was an US-biological weapon. This should deflect attention from the use of chemical agents in Afghanistan and was partially successful in achieving the wanted outcome.

The four D developed by White (2016) describe elements of disinformation. Later this has been extended to the five D:

- **Dismiss:** defame the source, deny the information
- **Distort:** manipulate context and content, invent content
- **Distract:** Russia wants that our thinking and talking follows their agenda, or at least: not our own agenda. Even while we debunk their disinformation, we are distracted from the truth and our relevant preparations and actions.
- **Dismay:** daunt, threaten and terrorize (nuclear threat to trigger "German Angst")
- **Divide:** Aikidō of disinformation, use the power of the enemy society to fight against itself (sponsor right-wing and left-wing to destabilize and to fuel political disputes)

Propaganda

Propaganda is communication that is primarily used to influence or persuade an audience to further an agenda, which may not be objective and may be selectively presenting facts to encourage a particular synthesis or perception, or using loaded language to produce an emotional rather than a rational response to the information that is being presented.[1] Propaganda can be found in a wide variety of different contexts. [Wikipedia](#)

Propaganda

War and hate propaganda has been banned since 1976. United Nation Treaties, Chapter IV, 4. INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, Article 20 states:

1. Any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law.
2. Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.

This [treaty](#) was signed 18 Mar 1968 and ratified 16 Oct 1973 by the Russian Federation.

The fascist manifesto "[What Russia should do with Ukraine](#)" published by the state news agency Ria Novosti violates Article 20, it

calls for the elimination of the Ukrainian elites and the "de-ukrainization" of the Ukrainian nation – even stripping Ukraine of its name, and destroying Ukrainian culture. Ukrainians are described in terms similar to the Nazi Untermenschen – subhuman, as the Nazis referred to non-Aryan "inferior people" such as "the masses from the East" – that is Jews, Roma, and Slavs.

This is pure fascism.

By publishing this story on April 3, the same day the world found out about horrible massacre of at least 400 Ukrainian civilians by the Russian army in Bucha, RIA Novosti has sunk to a level of cynicism not seen since the 1930s in Europe. This fascist manifesto lays bare the dreadful danger that the regime of Russian dictator Vladimir Putin now poses to Ukraine, and to the world.

Psychological warfare

Disinformation is part of *psychological warfare*. The term 'psychological warfare' is used *"to denote any action which is practiced mainly by psychological methods with the aim of evoking a planned psychological reaction in other people"* [Wikipedia](#).

Note that psychological reactions like fear, frustration and hopelessness are created using a mix of disinformation, military and terrorist actions. Particularly brutal methods were brought by Genghis Khan to Moscow:

Genghis Khan, leader of the Mongolian Empire in the 13th century AD employed less subtle techniques. Defeating the will of the enemy before having to attack and reaching a consented settlement was preferable to facing his wrath. The Mongol generals demanded submission to the Khan and threatened the initially captured villages with complete destruction if they refused to surrender. If they had to fight to take the settlement, the Mongol generals fulfilled their threats and massacred the survivors. Tales of the encroaching horde spread to the next villages and created an aura of insecurity that undermined the possibility of future resistance. [Wikipedia](#)

Since then, Russian dictators use brutal psychological warfare to expand the Russian empire and to suppress their own population.

Active Measures (1920)

Active measures (Russian: активные мероприятия, romanized: aktivnye meropriyatiya) is a term used to describe political warfare conducted by the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. The term, which dates back

to the 1920s, includes operations such as espionage, propaganda, sabotage and assassination, based on foreign policy objectives of the Soviet and Russian governments.[Wikipedia](#)

For more details see Galeotti (2019) Darczewska and Żochowski (2017)

Reflexive Control (1967)

Modern psychological warfare is a mixture of these brutal and more subtle methods. Soviet mathematical psychologist Vladimir Lefebvre developed the concept of *Reflexive Control* 1967 (Goeij (2023)). According to Kamphuis (2018), the elements of *Reflexive Control* are:

- **Distraction:** create a real or imaginary threat to the enemy's flank or rear during the preparatory stages of combat operations, forcing him to adapt his plans.
- **Overload** (of information): frequently sent large amounts of conflicting information.
- **Paralysis:** create the perception of an unexpected threat to a vital interest or weak spot.
- **Exhaustion:** compel the enemy to undertake useless operations, forcing him to enter combat with reduced resources.
- **Deception:** force the enemy to relocate assets in reaction to an imaginary threat during the preparatory stages of combat.
- **Division:** convince actors to operate in opposition to coalition interests.
- **Pacification:** convince the enemy that preplanned operational training is occurring rather than preparations for combat operations.
- **Deterrence:** create the perception of superiority.
- **Provocation:** force the enemy to take action advantageous to one's own side.
- **Suggestion:** offer information that affects the enemy legally, morally, ideologically, or in other areas.

Terms & Techniques

- **Pressure:** offer information that discredits the enemy's commanders and/or government in the eyes of the population.

For an empirical study on *Reflexive Control* in Russia's war against Ukraine see Doroshenko and Lukito (2021). For a detailed study on *Reflexive Control* see Vasara (2020)

Hybrid Warfare (2007)

The term *Hybrid war* or *hybrid warfare* was established by Hoffman and Policy Studies (2007) and describes a flexible mixture of regular and irregular, symmetrical and asymmetrical, military and non-military means of conflict, used openly and covertly, with the aim of blurring the threshold between the binary states of war and peace as defined by international law.

The boundary to the perfidy prohibited by the Geneva Conventions is blurred.

The Russian invasion of Crimea and the Donbass are clear examples of Hybrid Warfare: Russia sent soldiers without insignia, claiming that they were separatists, i.e. inner-Ukrainian actors, and accompanied this with hate propaganda: The 2014 Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Ukraine (Human Rights (2014)) found that Russia used *hate propaganda* violating article 20 during the invasion of Crimea:

New restrictions on free access to information came with the beginning of the Crimea crisis. Media monitors indicated a significant rise of propaganda on the television of the Russian Federation, which was building up in parallel to developments in and around Crimea. Cases of hate propaganda were also reported. Dmitri Kiselev, Russian journalist and recently-

Firehose of Falsehoods (2016)

appointed Deputy General Director of the Russian State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company, while leading news on the TV Channel "Rossiya" has portrayed Ukraine as a "country overrun by violent fascists", disguising information about Kyiv events, claimed that the Russians in Ukraine are seriously threatened and put in physical danger, thus justifying Crimea's "return" to the Russian Federation.

Firehose of Falsehoods (2016)

New Russian propaganda entertains, confuses and overwhelms the audience

According to Paul and Matthews (2016), the distinctive features of the *Firehose of Falsehoods* Model for Russian Propaganda are

- High-volume and multichannel (messages received in greater volume and from more sources will be more persuasive)
- Rapid, continuous, and repetitive (first impressions are very sticky, repetition leads to familiarity, and familiarity leads to acceptance)
- Lacks commitment to objective reality (fake evidence and other factors)
- Lacks commitment to consistency (not needed if distraction is the goal, not needed if the audience is not used to read longer texts, process longer thoughts)

Psychological studies show that when the brain is exposed to the same information continuously, it begins to perceive that information as true—regardless of conflicting or contrary evidence [Disinformation and Reflexive Control: The New Cold War](#)

Terms & Techniques

This means that when the New York Times, or any other publication, runs a headline like "[Trump Claims, With No Evidence, That 'Millions of People Voted Illegally,'](#)" it perversely reinforces the very claim it means to debunk. [Trump's Lies vs. Your Brain](#)

When we are overwhelmed with false, or potentially false, statements, our brains pretty quickly become so overworked that we stop trying to sift through everything [Trump's Lies vs. Your Brain](#)

Brendan Nyhan, a political scientist at Dartmouth University who studies false beliefs, has found that when false information is specifically political in nature, part of our political identity, it becomes almost impossible to correct lies. [Trump's Lies vs. Your Brain](#)

In recent times there are many examples but as it just happened yesterday 10 years ago i will use the example of the shooting down of MH17 by Russian forces. After the event Russian propaganda went into overdrive and used the "Firehose of Falsehoods".

Weaponized Narratives (2017)

The term *Weaponized Narratives* was introduced by B. R. Allenby (2017), B. Allenby and Garreau (2017). According to [The Weaponized Narrative Initiative](#) at *The Center on the Future of War*:

Weaponized narrative is an attack that seeks to undermine an opponent's civilization, identity, and will. By generating confusion, complexity, and political and social schisms, it confounds response on the part of the defender.

Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)

How Does Weaponized Narrative Work? A fast-moving information deluge is the ideal battleground for this kind of warfare – for guerrillas and terrorists as well as adversary states. A firehose of narrative attacks gives the targeted populace little time to process and evaluate. It is cognitively disorienting and confusing – especially if the opponents barely realize what’s hitting them. Opportunities abound for emotional manipulation undermining the opponent’s will to resist.

How Do You Recognize Weaponized Narratives? Efforts by Russia to meddle in the elections of Western democracies – including France and Germany as well as the United States – are in the news. The Islamic State’s weaponized narrative has been highly effective. Even political movements have caught on, as one can see in the rise of the alt-right in the United States and Europe. In short, many different types of adversaries have found weaponized narratives advantageous in this battlespace. Additional recent targets have included Ukraine, Brexit, NATO, the Baltics, and even the Pope.

Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)

Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) – also often labelled as “disinformation” – is a growing political and security challenge for the European Union. Given the foreign and security policy component, the European External Action Service has taken a leading role in addressing the issue. We significantly built up capacity to address the FIMI challenge since 2015, when the problem first appeared on the EU’s political agenda.

European External Action Service (EEAS)

Defining FIMI: The [EEAS](#) defines FIMI as a pattern of behaviour that threatens or has the potential to negatively impact values, procedures and political processes. Such activity is manipulative in character, conducted in an intentional and coordinated manner. Actors of such activity can be state or non-state actors, including their proxies inside and outside of their own territory.

Since 2015, the East Stratcom Task Force (ESTF) has been running the [EU-vsDisinfo](#) campaign to monitor, analyse and respond to pro-Kremlin disinformation, information manipulation and interference. The campaign's flagship initiative is the database of pro-Kremlin disinformation cases, regularly updated and debunked.

FIMI-ISAC

The [Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference \(FIMI\) - INFORMATION SHARING AND ANALYSIS CENTRE \(ISAC\)](#) is a group of like-minded organisations that engage in protecting democratic societies, institutions, and the critical information infrastructures of democracy from external manipulation and harm. Through collaboration, the FIMI-ISAC enables its members to detect, analyse and counter FIMI more rapidly and effectively, while upholding the fundamental value of freedom of expression.

FIMI-ISAC has published 2024 its first report on foreign influence on elections: [FIMI-ISAC Collective Findings I: Elections](#)

European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA)

The [European Union Agency for Cybersecurity \(ENISA\)](#) works with organisations and businesses to strengthen trust in the digital economy, boost the resilience of the EU's infrastructure, and, ultimately, keep EU citizens

digitally safe. It does this by sharing knowledge, developing staff and structures, and raising awareness. The EU Cybersecurity Act has strengthened the agency's work.

See also "Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) and Cybersecurity – Threat Landscape" (Cybersecurity, Magonara, and Malatras (2022))

Prebunking

prebunking.withgoogle.com, is a collaborative effort between the University of Cambridge, Jigsaw (Google) and BBC Media Action. The University of Cambridge's Social Decision-Making Lab has been at the forefront of developing prebunking approaches, based on inoculation theory, designed to build people's resilience to mis- and disinformation.

the website explains [Common Manipulation Techniques](#), explains [How To Prebunk](#), lists [Resources and Case Studies](#) and [Current Initiatives](#) and features a [Quiz](#). The short descriptions here are taken from their website and their The full [Practical Guide to Prebunking Misinformation](#).

Prebunking is a technique to preempt manipulation online. Prebunking messages are designed to help people identify and resist manipulative content. By forewarning people and equipping them to spot and refute misleading arguments, these messages help viewers gain resilience to being misled in the future.

There are two predominant forms of prebunking that address misinformation at a higher level beyond specific misinformation claims. They both address different types of misinformation:

- Misinformation narratives
- Misinformation techniques

Misinformation narratives

Misinformation encountered online often comes in the form of claims or opinions about a particular topic. However, individual misinformation claims can often feed into broader narratives. Issue-based prebunking tackles the broader, persistent narratives of misinformation beyond specific claims.

Tackling individual misinformation claims is timeconsuming and reactive, while prebunking broader narratives can dismantle the foundations of multiple claims at once and be much more effective at building resilience to new claims that share this false foundation.

Misinformation techniques

Technique-based prebunking focuses on the tactics used to spread misinformation. While the information that is used to manipulate and influence individuals online can widely vary, the techniques that are used to mislead are often repeated across topics and over time.

Decentralized Information Warfare

Russian information warfare is state sponsored, centralized and offensive. Western democracies do not run state sponsored and centralized troll factories that disseminate disinformation (and never will). Western democracies are for sure defensive and hence disadvantaged in the information warfare. Western democracies so far do not

- run offensive prebunking campaigns
- run large-scale entities that counter disinformation in realtime
- penalize the creators and disseminators of malign disinformation

Decentralized Information Warfare

Until Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Western democracies suffered largely helplessly from Russian disinformation, which worsened with the popularity of the fragmentation of private online press organs and social networks in particular.

With Russia's full invasion into Ukraine a new phenomenon appeared: Decentralized Information Warfare. An international grassroots movement called the [Nordatlantic Fella Organisation \(NAFO\)](#) emerged: engaged citizens worldwide fight russian disinformation and support the Ukrainian fight for freedom and peace. Here some articles about NAFO:

- 2023-01-25: [Decentralisation is NAFO's greatest strength](#)
- 2023-12-23: [Opinion: NAFO is waging Ukraine's meme war](#)
- 2024-06-24: [NAFO CLAIMS ANOTHER HIGH-PROFILE VICTIM](#)
- 2024-07-01: [NAFO fordert ein weiteres prominentes Opfer: Kampf gegen Desinformation](#)
- 2024-12-11: [The Age of Decentralized Information Warfare is Here](#)
- 2024-10-08: [Military Lessons for NATO from the Russia-Ukraine War](#)

Lessons from Ukraine

Learn from Ukraine: resilience against hybrid warfare from people with many years experience



Myth

There is nothing the EU can learn from Ukraine



Truth

The EU can learn a lot about how to counter russian hybrid warfare. Here we focus on countering disinformation.

The [Hybrid CoE Research Report](#), a joint effort between the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats and the Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab), focuses on Ukrainian best practices in countering disinformation, mainly in the period following Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion (FSI) of Ukraine. However, many of these practices are the result of an evolution spanning the decade since the Euromaidan revolution. The report identifies the following ten lessons that the West could learn from the unique Ukrainian experience.

Here we show the summary lessons, for more information consult Kalenský and Osadchuk (2024).

1. Laying a solid foundation is fundamental

A monitoring system so extensive that it generates overlap is a must. Rapidly refuting the lies, debunking disinformation, and setting the record straight are necessary conditions for successfully countering the disinformation campaigns. Action of any kind should be prioritized, contemplation must not paralyze efforts to fight back, and trial and error is both permitted and encouraged.

2. Numbers are crucial

Numbers really matter, be they human resources, financial resources, the number of different countermeasures and the various actors implementing them, or the repetition of key narratives from as many speakers as possible. Despite the fact that Ukrainians are putting far greater resources into counter-disinformation efforts than most Western countries, they understand that the aggressor still outstrips them.

3. Overlap is not a drawback, but rigidity is

The overlap between various monitoring, debunking, and counter-disinformation efforts is encouraged, not avoided. More actors working on the same topic means more reliable output, faster responses, and safeguards against the failure of one of them. In coordination, the loose nature and lack of formal procedures facilitates and speeds up responses.

4. Cherish the role of civil society

No government in the world can tackle the problem of disinformation alone. Civil society is absolutely crucial. Ukraine has shown how a vibrant, active and energetic civil society, constantly coming up with new ideas, protected the information space even before the government entered the scene, and how crucial it still is for many target audiences.

5. Preparation is essential, but not a panacea

Preparation for the conflict was vital; it is important not only to prepare contingency plans and ensure that the relevant teams are ready to act in the event of war, but also to prepare the crisis messaging and backup channels. However, plans must not become dogma; adaptability is also key. The Ukrainian example also serves as a warning, showing that despite facing a prolonged conflict, a society may still refuse to believe the worst-case scenarios.

6. Punitive measures are a must

It is impossible to rely only on defence and building up resilience against attacks. Punitive measures that limit the capability of hostile actors, or at least impose additional costs on their behaviour, must be part of the package. For many Ukrainian practitioners, these tools are the most important when it comes to protecting the information space against the aggressor.

7. Humour is a serious matter

Content generating amusement is used very deliberately by Ukrainians. Humour helps to reach larger audiences, and humorous content goes viral more often. It also helps to boost the morale of those under attack, and increase resilience to aggression in both the kinetic and the information space. And finally, it helps to impose costs on the disinformers by mocking and ridiculing them, and damaging their credibility.

8. Actions speak louder than words

When the atrocities reached their most horrifying level, it became impossible to use disinformation narratives to convince people about a “brotherly” Russia that attacks exclusively military targets. When Western countries took in Ukrainian refugees and started sending military and financial aid, it became impossible to successfully claim that the West had abandoned Ukraine altogether. However, audiences in occupied territories, cut off from any sources of real information, are still under threat.

9. The information war is not over – and won’t end anytime soon

Despite some optimistic takes by Western commentators, no one in Ukraine would consider that the information war has already been won and that they could cease their efforts. Everyone understands that Russia’s information aggression will continue adapting to new circumstances, and that it is of the utmost importance to continue fighting against it.

10. The West needs to catch up with Ukraine

When it comes to Western partners, Ukrainians would like to see them doing what Ukraine has been doing during the last decade: taking Russian disinformation seriously and actively resisting it. Concerns persist among Ukrainians regarding the success of Russian disinformation abroad. As a nation under attack, they also propose an “Information Ramstein” to provide support not just in the form of weapons but also in the information space. Ultimately, Ukrainian civil society remains reliant on support from the West.

Learning Ukraine

What you didn't know: Find out more about Ukraine, about the origins of Europe and about Russian lies

Worth knowing about Ukraine

The [Kyiv Independent](#) is Ukraine's fastest-growing English-language media outlet, created in November 2021, just three months before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. Kyiv Independent has two sections dedicated to Ukraine:

- [Dare to Ukraine](#) features a series of videos on Ukrainian towns and regions
- [Explaining Ukraine](#) features a series of articles that explain Ukrainian historical and cultural events and figures in order to help the world understand Ukraine better

The website [Ukraïner](#) provides lots of movies, fotos and stories about Ukraine.

The website [Being Ukraine](#) provides stories and artworks from a nation under fire, made of hope, pride, and resilience.

Learning Ukraine

The free online-book *Being Ukraine* edited by Lanoux (2024) of the Connecticut College introduces into history and culture of Ukraine.

The Katapult publishing house distributes a very descriptive book with facts in [100 Maps of Ukraine](#), here is a [reading sample](#) and here a [free Russian version](#).

The Q&A website [uaqa.com](#) allows to ask questions about Ukraine related topics and provides collected answers.

PEN Ukraine has compiled a list of [100 Books to Help Understand Ukraine](#)

Lies from russia

The newspaper Kyiv Post has published [25 myths and facts about Ukraine and Ukrainians](#). This is a nice list, unfortunately it follows the naive debunking approach of using 25 lies as highlighted section headers (=summaries) of the paragraphs that follow. Very likely readers recall these summaries (=lies).

Better debunking does [Suspilne Kultura](#), a Ukrainian public TV channel showcasing culture in Ukraine. It has created a video series on [big russian lies](#). At the time of writing, the following episodes were available:

- [How Russia REWRITES history in its favor](#)
- [Russian literature is FAKE!? How the Kremlin uses it for war](#)
- [How the Kremlin pushes its «Russian world» using cinema](#)
- [«Swan Lake» on the ruins: how does Russia loot art?](#)
- [How does the Kremlin LIMITS the media?](#)
- ["Neutral" athletes are 'in the grip of pogroms'? How Russia is returning to sports \(not yet in English\)](#)

If you want proof for the most evil russian propaganda, see the [articles of Julia Davies](#) and her [Russian Media Monitor on youtube](#).

Agents & Vatniks

Know the bad guys: about infiltration of our society by russian influence agents

[Vatnik](#) is a political pejorative used in Russia and other post-Soviet states for steadfast jingoistic followers of propaganda from the Russian government. In the wider sense the word 'Vatnik' is also used for influence agents, who disseminate russian propaganda.

The network of russia propaganda

Russia runs an international network of influence agents that disseminate disinformation, spread fear, shape public opinion and manipulate elections. [Vox Ukraine](#) has analyzed it:

Similar speakers [influence agents] try to position themselves as "independent experts" who "reveal the global truth." However, their systematic appearances on Russian state channels, visits to Moscow or temporarily occupied territories, and overt admiration for Putin indicate the opposite. The danger of the activities of such "experts" lies not only in their dissemination of narratives identical to those favored by pro-Russian entities. Each of them has its own supportive audience, a certain level

Agents & Vatniks

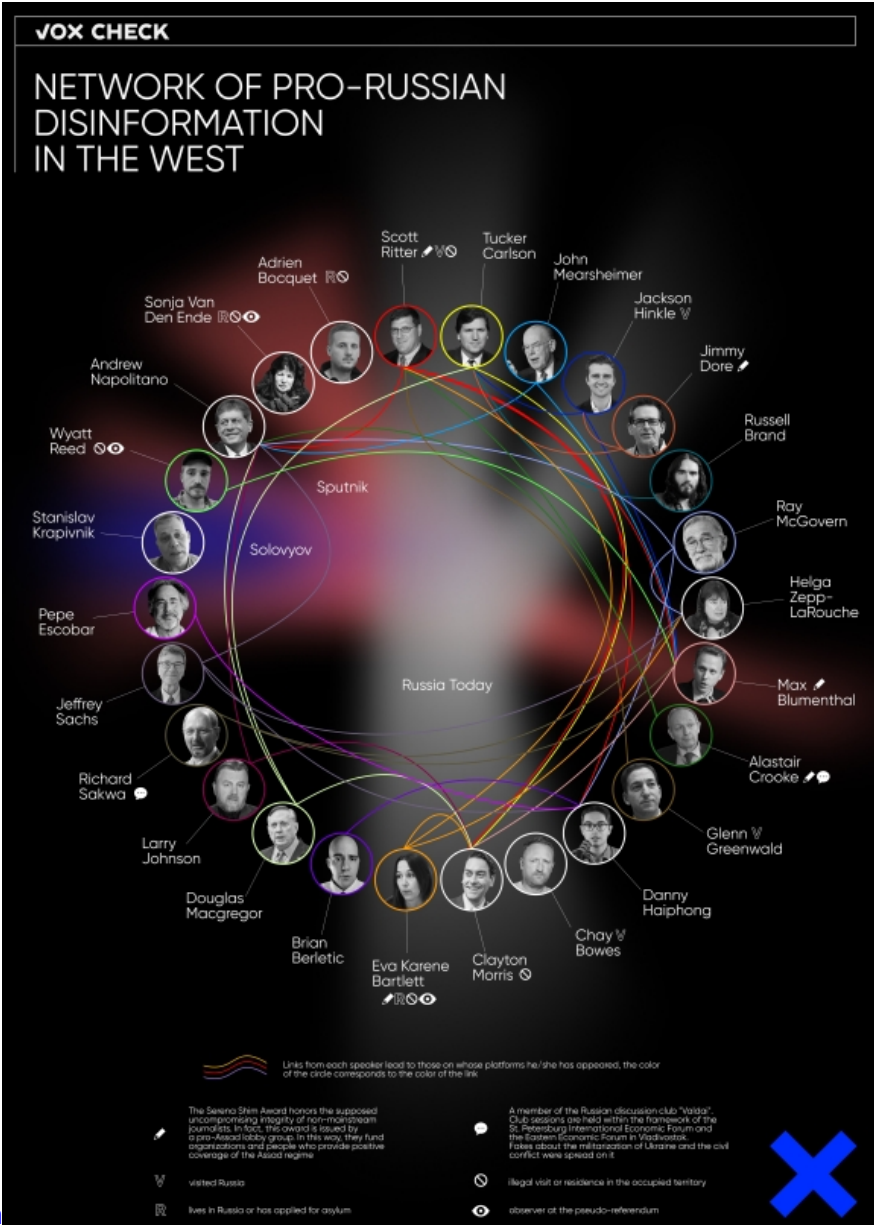
of authority, and a cultivated image built over the years. As a result, they gain access to significant platforms of influence.

So, when they popularize pro-Russian theses, they legitimize Russian propaganda in the West. The illusion of mass appeal and expertise is formed through joint broadcasts, columns in the media, newly created awards, and prizes. Furthermore, Russian media quote and reference their materials to corroborate their statements. Thanks to such citations, Russian narratives can also be relayed in the Ukrainian information space, disguised as "Western." Therefore, it is important to identify these connections to restrain the spread of pro-Russian narratives both in the West and in Ukraine.

The Network of Russian Propaganda: What Connects Western "Experts"

The network of russia propaganda

Promoting Narratives Beneficial to Russia



Vatnik soups

#vatniksoup is a Twitter thread series (and a hashtag!) where Pekka Kallioniemi, a computer lecturer from Tampere University, Finland, introduces pro-Russian actors and propagandists from around the world, be they so-called “independent journalists”, politicians, military personnel or just regular grifters looking to get some easy money.

The series also has introductions and deeper insights on how online propaganda and disinformation works and is spread. For example, Kallioniemi talks about troll farms, social media manipulation and Russia’s online information operations.

Meanwhile Vatnik soups are available outside twitter as a book [Vatnik Soup. The Ultimate Guide to Russian Disinformation](#) and as an independent website.



[Vatnik Soup website](#)

Vatnik database

[Texty.org.ua](#) is an independent website founded by Anatoliy Bondarenko and Roman Kulchynskyi in 2010.

We create data journalism projects and work in traditional journalistic genres: from extensive reports to short messages. We

have a Ukrainian view of the world. We try to explore the problem we are writing about as much as possible and show what is really happening, and not just publishing different points of view.

At the beginning of December 2022, TEXTY published the material entitled ["The Germs of "Russian World"](#) — one of our most elaborate and important projects of the year. The study offered a comprehensive insight into the people and organizations that support Russia and its policy in various forms in 19 countries of Europe. We managed to identify over 1,300 individuals and some 900 organizations that met the following criteria: voting for pro-Russian decisions and issuing statements in support of the war or calling to drop the sanctions, taking part in pro-Russian propagandist shows, partnering with the institutions which facilitate Russia's cultural expansion etc.



[The Germs of "Russian World" Version 1.0](#)

Agents & Vatniks

Over the course of four months we improved and updated our dataset and made it more search-friendly. In addition to that, we prepared a series of thematic materials on certain categories of the potential agents of "Russian World". Today, we are proudly presenting the [updated version 2.0](#) of our project.

This updated version 2.0 is a database of 2109 Persons which is searchable by name, country and activity, and returns further information (and proofs) about these persons. The database can also be downloaded as a csv-file. This selection of individuals is only the tip of the iceberg, and even the tip has holes: many influence agents are missing, let alone "vatniks" in the narrower sense of "useful idiots".



[The Germs of "Russian World" Version 2.0](#)

TEXTY is presenting [The Atlas of Russian Lobby in Europe](#) project which offers an insight into the representatives of various circles who, one way or another, facilitated or have been

facilitating the promotion of Russian business interests in the EU — from government officials to PR experts and lawyers, from “Russian friendship” groups to informal networking forums. Despite the fact that many of such initiatives have been put on hold, once the war is over or as soon as there is a temporary deescalation, those individuals and entities are likely to be among the most vocal supporters of restoring the former economic ties with Russia.



[The Lobbying Atlas: 250+ people and companies related to Russia's business interests in Europe](#)

Narratives

Recognize the pattern: learn to detect known russian narratives in propaganda texts that look harmless

The concept of “narratives” often comes up in the context of Russian and pro-Kremlin disinformation and influence efforts.

A narrative is an overall message, communicated through texts, images, metaphors, and other means. For example, repeatedly portraying individual politicians as crooks will eventually establish a narrative that politicians in general are corrupt and deceitful;

Pro-Kremlin disinformation outlets use a set of narratives that work as templates for particular stories and can be adapted to a target audience. Different narratives are used for various audiences;

Some of these narratives have been in use for hundreds of years. Variations of the narrative of “The Decaying West” are documented since the 19th century.

Narratives can be combined and modified based on current events and prevailing attitudes.

[EUvsDisinfo](#) has identified some categories of repeating narratives. It is

worth knowing these:



Narratives

Narrative 1: the Elites v the People

The idea of an elite disconnected from the hard-working people runs strongly in political history. Several - often rich - politicians and political movements have claimed to represent the voice of the common man, the little guy, the silent majority, against a corrupt and smug clique comprising of the representatives of political parties, corporations and the media. This narrative is not the Kremlin's invention, but pro-Kremlin

disinformation outlets exploit it frequently. See



Narrative 2: The 'Threatened Values'

The narrative about 'Threatened Values' is adapted to a wide range of topics and typically used to challenge Western attitudes about the rights of women, ethnic and religious minorities, and LGBTQI+ groups, among others. Pro-Kremlin commentators ridicule alleged Western 'moral decay' or 'depraved attitudes'. By contrast, Russia and Orthodox Christianity stand out as the true defenders of traditional values, as by this official Russian

promotional video([opens in a new tab](#)) illustrates. See



Narrative 3: 'Lost Sovereignty'

Russian and pro-Kremlin disinformation sources like to claim that certain countries are no longer truly sovereign. Back in 2015, a cartoonist for the Russian state news agency RIA Novosti illustrated this idea with an

Narrative 4: 'The Imminent Collapse'

image: Uncle Sam is turning up the flame on a gas stove, forcing Europeans to jump up and down while crying for sanctions against Russia. See



Narrative 4: 'The Imminent Collapse'

In Aristotelian rhetoric, the concept of *kairos* denotes a sense of urgency for action. Most speakers utilize this concept when they claim: act now, before it's too late! In the pro-Kremlin disinformation context, the narra-

tive of the 'Imminent Collapse' fulfills this function. See



Narrative 5: 'The Hahaganda'

A final resort in disinformation, typically when confronted with compelling evidence or unassailable arguments, is to make a joke about the subject,

or to ridicule the topic at hand. See



Narrative joker: "Nazis"

The picture of pro-Kremlin disinformation would not be complete without considering the narrative of 'Nazis' that summarizes in a single word the mythology sustaining the Kremlin's regime: all enemies (and victims) of

Russia are Nazis. See



Narratives

Further collection

EUvsDisinfo publishes more collections of russian narratives. However, these follow a dangerous approach, to merge - like real propaganda - some basic narratives together and use those as section headers (summaries) of much longer sections that require more reading and often refer linke to to debunking elsewhere. The risk is high, that readers remember the summaries (= lies). Here is an example: [Thirteen myths about Russia's war against Ukraine exposed](#)


Part B

Example Part

1 My Chapter2

This optional 120 - 160 character abstract is shown and goes to twitter and open-graph

Myth

Disinfo narrative here (and replace the seach text in the following link to euvdisinfo) 

Truth

Truth narrative here (this is the one we explain and prove in the following text) WIKIPEDIA

1.1 Storyline Subtitle One

My text here. This is a [my linktext](#) to a source. This is *emphasized*, This is **bold**. This is ***both***.

This is a citation continued over multiple lines

1 My Chapter2

This Hawking (1988) is a literature reference prepared in the .bib bibtex file belonging to this chapter.

1.2 Storyline Subtitle Two

TODO

1.3 Storyline Subtitle Three

TODO

1.4 Storyline Subtitle Four

TODO

{{ reserved }}

Team & Partners

Discover our network: who are we and our partners?

Core team

Nord Atlantic Fella Organiztion (NAFO)

Maker and User of the dictionary: [NAFO](#) is a grassroots movement that fights disinformation and supports freedom and democracy worldwide with a focus on Ukraine.

[fellas4europe](#)

Legal and financial home of the dictionary: [fellas4europe](#) is a German NGO that supports freedom and democracy in Europe with a focus on Ukraine through humanitarian help and political awareness.

Team & Partners

Civil Network OPORA

Founding partner of the dictionary: [Civil Network OPORA](#) develops in society the practices of responsible decisions and actions through the advocacy of fair rules to enhance security and democracy in Ukraine.

Ukrainian Security & Cooperation Center (USCC)

As an security precaution, we transparently allow the independent USCC to monitor our activities: the [Ukrainian Security & Cooperation Center \(USCC\)](#) was established in April 2021 by the team, created during the Revolution of Dignity. The organisation works to strengthen Ukraine's information sustainability and security.

Content partners

Transatlantic Dialogue Center (TDC)

Initial content contributor: [Transatlantic Dialogue Center \(TDC\)](#) is a non-governmental and non-partisan think tank that provides high-quality policy advice to private and public clients. TDC published *"Ukraine Clarity Debunking Myths and Misinformation in Germany"* in German Center (2024b) and English Center (2024a).

VoxCheck

Initial content contributor (via TDC): [VoxCheck](#) VoxCheck is a fact-checking project of the independent analytical platform "Vox Ukraine". The team exposes lies, manipulations, and Russian propaganda both in Ukraine and abroad.

StopFake

Maintainer of a list of russian narratives: The nongovernmental organization Media Reforms Center is an educational platform, founded by Mohyla School of Journalism at National University of 'KyivMohyla Academy', its flagship project [StopFake](#) does identify cases of fake information about events in Ukraine, and does research about narratives and about how to resist the shameful phenomenon of disinformation.

EUvsDisinfo

Maintainer of a database and provider of a newsletter on desinformation: [EUvsDisinfo](#) is the flagship project of the EU to better forecast, address, and respond to the Russian Federation's ongoing disinformation campaigns affecting the European Union, its Member States, and countries in the shared neighbourhood. EUvsDisinfo's core objective is to increase public awareness and understanding of the Kremlin's disinformation operations, and to help citizens in Europe and beyond develop resistance to digital information and media manipulation.

International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN)

We commit to the [IFCN code of Principles](#) but have not applied for signatory status yet: the [International Fact-Checking Network \(IFCN\) at Poynter](#) is committed to promoting excellence in fact-checking. IFCN believes non-partisan and transparent fact-checking can be a powerful instrument of accountability journalism. Conversely, unsourced or biased fact-checking can increase distrust in the media and experts while polluting public understanding.

Team & Partners

Start-up partners

Akademie für politische Bildung

Project development: [Akademie für politische Bildung](#) is dedicated to the delivery, stimulation and cultivation of political knowledge in Bavaria and Germany above all party lines. Thus it is working towards a stronger foundation of our democracy and its international relations.

TechCamp

Project development and start-up financing: [TechCamp](#) TechCamp is a public diplomacy program hosted in the Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs (ECA) at the U.S. Department of State. TechCamp was closed on January 15, 2025. Funding for the Disinfo dictionary was discontinued by DOGE on February 27.

Technical partners

Deepl

The multilingual Disinformation Dictionary strongly benefits from the translation services of [Deepl](#). After Russia's invasion in February 2022, Deepl quickly responded to customer wishes to integrate the Ukrainian language into its language portfolio. We thank Deepl and recommend it as *the* best translation engine we are aware of.

GitHub

Source code hosting: [GitHub](#) is the home of most open-source projects today. It provides version-controlled storage of code together with processes for collaborative coding.

Cloudflare

Website hosting: the [Cloudflare](#) global network is one of the fastest on the planet and can reach about 95% of the world's population within approximately 50 ms. Cloudflare is known for its network security and superior protection against DDOS-attacks.

Recommendations

Find more: links to recommended sources related to teaching media literacy and debunking russian narratives.

Other dictionaries

- The [Disinformation Glossary](#) of the [EU Disinfo Lab](#)
- The [Lexicon of Lies](#) of [Data&Society](#)
- Claire Wardle's [Information Disorder Glossary](#)

Teaching materials

- Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training (Commission, Directorate-General for Education, and Culture (2022))
- How to spot and fight disinformation - Toolkit for teachers (Commission and Communication (2024))
- EU teaching materials for [pupils aged 9 and under](#) and for [pupils aged 15 and over](#)

Recommendations

NGOs

- [fellas4europe](#)
- [EUvsDisinfo](#)
- [StopFake](#)
- [MIMIKAMA](#) - think first - then click
- [OPORA](#)
- [VoxCheck](#)
- [Mediendienst Integration](#) is an information platform of the german "Council for Migration e.V." on the topics of flight, migration and discrimination, and provides some pages in English. However, be aware that they pretend to know only about right-wing extremism, not about left-wing extremism or problems with Russian infiltration of German institutions.

Media

- [European Digital Media Observatory](#)
- [dpa fact checking](#)
- [DW \(Deutsche Welle\)](#)
- [BBC reality check](#)
- [BBC information disorder](#)
- [CNN facts first](#)
- [Arte politics an society](#)

Ukraine War Archive (UWA)

The [Ukraine War Archive \(UWA\)](#) is a non-profit collaborative digital preservation platform that creates a unified register of materials related to the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. With innovative technological and

methodological approaches, it serves as a tool for Ukrainian and international organizations to preserve history and fairly represent events in legal, historical, and cultural discourse, establishing a foundation for truth and justice. Ukraine War Archive is not a public resource. Access to it can be obtained after a background check and authorisation. However, some of UWA's [projects](#) are publicly accessible in whole or in part.

Russian Media Monitor

Russian Media and TV publish every day calls to annihilate the Ukrainian military, Ukrainian culture and the Ukrainian people. An excellent source for this is the *Russian Media Monitor* by Julia Davis – Investigative Reporter, Russian Media Analyst and Commentator at www.russialies.com.

German Government

- [Disinformation related to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine](#)
- [Federal Agency for Civic Education](#)

[Center for Liberal Modernity](#)

Books

[Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took On the West](#)

Recommendations

Experts

Disinformation Analyst Dietmar Pichler is building a [Disinformation Resilience Network \(DRN\)](#), a non-profit and non-partisan organization dedicated to analyzing the impact of disinformation, propaganda, and extremist ideologies by foreign and domestic actors on the information space of democratic societies.

DRN provides a platform for experts from various fields such as political science, journalism, history, security, and diplomacy to exchange ideas, collaborate, and network. DRN works closely with national and international organizations, educators, analysts, and stakeholders relevant to these topics.

On 2024 November 29, under the title [Foreign Interference, Subversion & Disinformation](#) experts, diplomats, and representatives from politics and civil society gathered for an exchange of views.

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Read more: literature that is important and not listed as online links in chapters of the Disinfo Dictionary

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