FREE WEBINAR

DISINFORMATION

PANDEMIC

8/2/2021 15:00h CET

UBIQ webinars

SPEAKERS

John Mitchell
Speaker, researcher, consultant, and coach
Critical Thinking

Nanditha Kalidoss
Health Fellow (Misinformation)
Factly Media & Research

Matt Verich
Co-founder and President
The Disinformation Project

Öyküm Hüma Keskin
Facebook Health Disinformation Fellow
Teyit

Anneli Ahonen
Head of East Stratcom Task Force
European External Action Service

Megi Kartsivadze
Analyst of Memory and Disinformation Studies
Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)

PROGRAM

14:45   Login to the webinar

15:00   Start of the webinar

15:10   **EU's Response Against Foreign Disinformation Related to COVID-19: Example of East Stratcom Task Force**

The health crisis around COVID-19 continues to provide ample opportunities worldwide for the spread of mis- and disinformation. State actors like Russia and others are maximizing the effect of the so-called "vaccine diplomacy" in their communication efforts, most likely with the intent to enhance their reputation and economic position abroad, while mocking Western manufacturers. The audience will hear a brief timeline of developments how foreign actors have exploited disinformation to achieve their political goals, and what the EU has done to respond. East Stratcom Task Force was created in 2015 at the European External Action Service to address Russia's ongoing disinformation campaigns.

Anneli Ahonen
Head of East Stratcom Task Force
European External Action Service

15:40   **Predictions and the Pandemic: How to Live in the Real World?**

COVID-19 is raging and the world is alight with conspiracy theories and misinformation. No wonder we are scared for our future. In this talk, we´ll hear about a technique to help us spot the baloney, and find out why it is that although we sometimes find it hard to deal with the truth, we will be much better off if we live in the real world.

- **How to spot a conspiracy theory - "ignorance as proof"**
- **Inaccurate predictions are not lies**
- **The optimism bias**
- **Reasons to be cheerful**

John Mitchell
Speaker, researcher, consultant, and coach
Critical Thinking

Critical
Thinking

The science to better decision making

16:10   Debunking Vaccine Hesitancy: A Threat to Public Health

Draft pointers on the topic of Vaccine Hesitancy:
1. Vaccine hesitancy is as old as vaccination itself
2. Even before the rise of digital communication and misinformation, there existed this hesitancy towards vaccines for multiple reasons
3. And today, vaccines are no exceptions- given the misinformation ranges from the innocently misleading to the intentionally deceiving.
4. Over half a million children die due to vaccine-preventable diseases in India
5. This infodemic threatens to augment vaccine hesitancy, which in turn could impact routine immunization programs, complicate new vaccine introductions, and erode public trust in public health

- Definitions of misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation
- Why are people susceptible to misinformation?
- Vaccine misinformation and how is it shaping up in the digital communications age
- Reasons for vaccine hesitancy
- Case Study
- The Way Forward

Nanditha Kalidoss
Health Fellow (Misinformation)
Factly Media & Research

16:40   BREAK

16:50   The ObjeCtives of the COVID-19 Disinformation and Strategies for Countering It

In the times of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has faced another challenge - widespread disinformation and emerging conspiracy theories related to coronavirus that pose threat to public health and institutions. The COVID-19 disinformation encompasses various types of narratives such as (1) the theories that the virus was created artificially in a laboratory by the US, UK, Russia, or China; (2) accusations that migrants caused the spread of the virus all around the world; (3) conspiracies about the links between the COVID-19 and 5G technology; (4) anti-vaccination campaigns, etc. However, each of these narratives has different origins, objectives, and strategies for spreading in society. In general, the objectives of the COVID-19 disinformation include the increase of polarization of the society, sowing distrust toward the healthcare systems and the government, and fostering chaos. Additionally, recent studies have revealed that the sources of the COVID-19 disinformation vary from the state actors to private media outlets. Therefore, depending on the content of the narrative, objectives, and origins, different types of COVID-19 disinformation require specific strategies for countering it. This means that in-depth study of the widespread disinformation narratives is of paramount importance for elaborating effective countering mechanisms.

1. Threats of the COVID-19 disinformation to public health and institutions
2. COVID-19 disinformation narratives
3. Strategies for spreading the COVID-19 disinformation
4. Objectives of the COVID-19 disinformation
5. Sources of the COVID-19 disinformation
6. Strategies for countering the COVID-19 disinformation

Megi Kartsivadze
Analyst of Memory and Disinformation Studies
Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)

IDFI | Institute for Development of Freedom of Information

17:20 **The Disinformation Crisis Requires Culture Change**

Disinformation, long a tool of control for authoritarian governments, has - fueled by technology - exploded in scale and reach. Several inter-related trends have converged to amplify disinformation into full-blown national security and public health crisis: The rise of "free" and ubiquitous social media, the decline of journalism, and the loss of trust in public institutions. States will struggle to combat the problem as they navigate the tricky Shoalwater that separates security and free speech. So far the search for solutions has focused almost entirely on tech companies and their civic responsibility to police their own platforms. But censorship and "truth police" will do little to shore up trust, and will come at the expense of free speech. More must be done to educate and change the behaviors of the users; most of whom are unwitting participants in a malign contest for control. The Disinformation Project aims to raise awareness among teens and to empower them to find solutions tailored to their local conditions. We believe that changing online behaviors and how we consume information will innoculate the public from disinformation. Each of us has the power to fight disinformation and render it impotent. We only need to wake up to the problem.

- Disinformation is national security and public health threat to Western liberal democracies.
- Bad actors - from authoritarian states to political parties to fringe social groups - are adopting information technology in a bid to control large segments of the population.
- So far there has been too much emphasis on top-down regulation and legislation to encourage tech companies to police themselves.
- The State should focus on the content creators, to the extent they break existing laws, and not the unwitting content spreaders or the platforms that host the content.
- A culture change around online behavior and how users consume information will innoculate the public.
- We aim to raise awareness among teens, the greatest hope for changing culture and behavior.

Matt Verich
Co-founder and President
The Disinformation Project

DIS IN FORM ATION

17:50 **Covid-19 Infodemic: Understanding and dealing with disinformation**

It's been almost a year since Covid-19 entered our lives, and almost nothing is the same as before. During this difficult process, struggling with the virus itself has been hard enough. But there is another issue at least as dangerous as the virus, which is the infodemic. Being exposed to lots of fake health information while trying to protect yourself from the virus can cause unwanted hazardous results. That's why we should fight against the infodemic as well as the virus itself. Teyit has developed many tools to eliminate the possible threats of the infodemic like a threat to public health, polarization, and social stigma. In this talk, we will take a closer look at the infodemic, how we can cope with that problem and how Teyit team struggle with infodemic.

- **What is infodemic and why is it dangerous?**
- **Research: How was the information ecosystem affected by the pandemic in Turkey?**
- **The most popular types of misinformation during the pandemic**
- **How does Teyit struggle with infodemic: Community-based struggle**
- **Creative ways to spread truth in pandemic**

Öyküm Hüma Keskin
Facebook Health Disinformation Fellow
Teyit

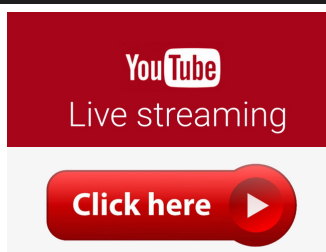

18:20 **DISCUSSION**

18:40 **END OF THE WEBINAR**

Main goal:
Increase awareness about this problem and discuss the potential solutions

Designed for:
International public, students, social media professionals, disinformation experts, journalists

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