

The Journal

An introduction to The Journal's FactCheck unit

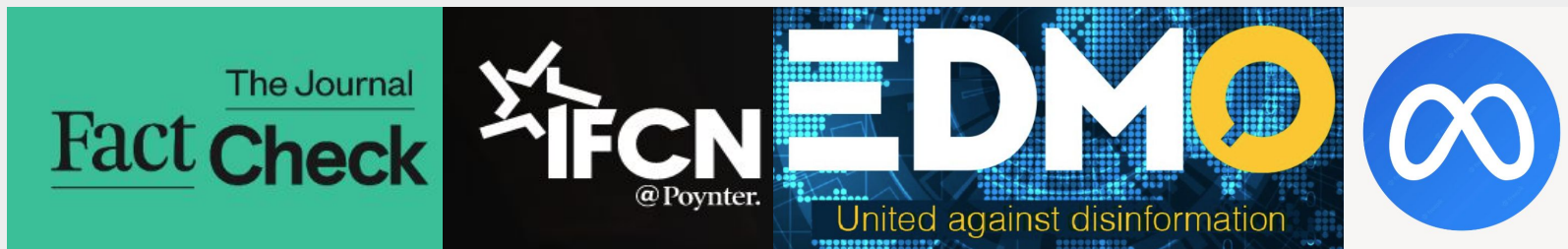
National Counter Disinformation Strategy

20 April 2023

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Who are we?

- A unit located within the newsroom of one of Ireland's most-read online news sources
- The only verified Republic of Ireland signatory of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN)
- The fact-checking partner for Ireland's EDMO hub (European Digital Media Observatory)
- An independent third-party fact-checker helping to fight misinformation on Meta's platforms



What do we fact-check?

- **Political claims:** e.g. “The Govt lied about increasing the pension age.”
- **Useful info for readers:** e.g. Will an increase in carbon tax make people in Ireland poorer?
- **Studies:** e.g. Are kids who are smacked “more successful” later in life?
- **Perennial debates:** e.g. Are restricted dog breeds more dangerous?
- **Outright misinformation:** e.g. “Vaccines cause cancer”

In short: **anything where a claim is made for which there is a probable true/false answer or where an approximate number can be produced.**

In the beginning, there was #GE2016...



GE16 FACT CHECK

FactCheck: Were 135,000 new jobs really gained under Fine Gael?

TheJournal.ie's GE16 FactCheck has tested one of Fine Gael's major campaign pitches.

FactCheck: Who wants to get rid of the Special Criminal Court?

FactCheck: Did Labour really break a pledge not to increase student fees?



GE16 FACT CHECK

FactCheck: The truth and the lies from last night's Leaders' Debate



GE16 FACT CHECK

FactCheck: What effect does JobBridge and other schemes have on our unemployment rate?

FactCheck: Is Alan Kelly right to say 80% of people are paying for water?

2016-2020: Supplementing the news



FACTCHECK

FactCheck: Who got it right in this abortion debate between Ruth Coppinger and Cora Sherlock?



FactCheck: Was the burgundy passport 'enforced' on Britain when it joined the EU?

Today the Conservative Party said the UK's exit from the EU gives it an opportunity to restore its national identity.

FactCheck: Is it cheaper for the State to build houses directly than to use the private sector?

FACTCHECK

FactCheck: Was the FAI's rescue package from the government a 'bailout'?

Shane Ross insisted the €20m package is not a bailout – but is he right?



FACTCHECK

Factcheck: Is it illegal for gardaí to go on strike?

FactCheck: Is Varadkar right to say immigrants are more likely to be working than Irish people?

2020: Along came Covid



Why those messages you're getting on WhatsApp about coronavirus cases in Ireland are (probably) not true

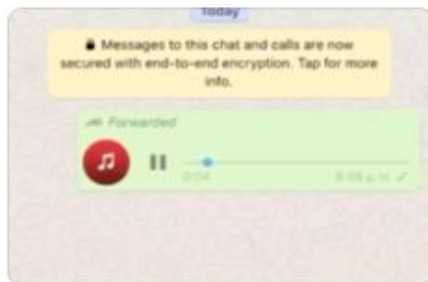
That WhatsApp message you got might sound believable – but check it out for yourself before sharing it.

DEBUNKED

Got any messages on WhatsApp about coronavirus that sound untrue? Send it to us and we'll check it out

TheJournal.ie is debunking some of the n rumours going around about coronavirus

42.3k 0 Mar 13th 2020, 5:44



FACTCHECK

FactFind: Have Covid-19 vaccines been tested among older age groups?

FactCheck: No, a claim by an Irish doctor that PCR tests have a 97% false positive rate is not true

Debunked: 'No substance whatsoever' to WhatsApp voicenote claiming Ireland is going into 'Status Red' lockdown

The Defence Forces has dismissed the widely-shared message as “irresponsible”.

How do we fact-check?

- We examine a wide range of issues and examine the claims of a wide range of individuals and organisations.
- Sources include (but are not limited to): TV and radio; Dáil debates; social media platforms; statements by non-profit groups; and our readers.
- We link to raw, public data where it exists and name and define clearly any expert advice and input from sources external to our factcheck team.
- We apply one of eight ratings (for a factcheck) or explain clearly why something is untrue (when debunking something).

It is extremely important that our readers can follow our work from nose to tail.

By outlining our processes, we hope to equip readers with tools to distinguish quality information from less trustworthy content for themselves.

Building trust and impact

Articles for The Journal: Features and analysis about misinformation, movements and trends in Ireland.

Disinformation-monitoring: Watching social platforms; following bad actors and regular disinfo spreaders; monthly analysis reports.

Finding new ways to connect: Eg, monthly newsletter to deep dive what's happening with fake news and disinformation trends in Ireland and further afield; Insta True/False; increasing audience ways of contacting us

**'A young girl has lost her life':
Unproven claim about
homeless death spreads from
Facebook to the Dáil**



**THE EARTHQUAKE IN TURKEY AND
SYRIA SPARKS DISINFORMATION AND
CONSPIRACY THEORIES ALL OVER THE EU**

Monthly brief no. 21 – EDMO fact-checking network

FACTCHECK

**FactCheck: Sign up to The
Journal's monthly newsletter
about misinformation trends**

The next phase: Opportunities and challenges

Technological advances: AI could allow fact-checkers to analyse misinformation - but bad actors can also use it to spread fake news.

Collaborations: Fact-checkers are sharing resources and coming together to build tools and partnerships - but resourcing remains an issue and trends and sources vary widely from country to country.

Legislation: Countries and the EU are seeking to take a stand against misinformation - but the process can be more slow-moving than technological advancements which allow fake news to spread.

Public awareness: More people are aware of fact-checking and have learned to be more media literate - but some have also grown to distrust fact-checkers and our processes in tandem with general distrust in the 'official line', potentially making our work less impactful.

Questions?
