

# National Counter Disinformation Strategy

## Working Group

20 April 2023

**Attendees:** Martina Chapman (Independent Chair)  
Paul Kilkenny (D/TCAGSM)  
Fiona Shevlin (D/TCAGSM)  
Eugene Farrelly (D/Taoiseach)  
Nick Callan (An Coimisiún Toghcháin – Electoral Commission)  
David Bruck (D/FA)  
Elizabeth Harvey (D/ETE)  
Muiriosa Ryan (D/Health, HSE)  
Maria Bracken (D/Education, Webwise)  
Eileen Culloty (EDMO Ireland)  
Cathal McCauley (Library Association of Ireland)  
Una Fitzpatrick (Technology Ireland)  
Susan Daly (Press Ombudsman representative)  
Deborah Molloy Bergin (Coimisiún na Meán – Media Commission)  
Johnny Ryan (Irish Council for Civil Liberties)  
Stephanie Comey (Media Literacy Ireland)  
Paul Gordon (National Youth Council of Ireland)  
Invited Presentation: Maria Baghramian (University College Dublin)  
Invited Presentation: Stephen McDermott (The Journal)

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### **Presentations**

Maria Baghramian presented on the forthcoming Trustworthiness Toolkit developed by UCD. The toolkit will be open source and its target audience will be senior cycle secondary school students. Stephen McDermott of the Journal presented on The Journal's FactCheck unit and fact-checking. The unit has one full time staff member and is partly funded by EDMO.

## **Discussion**

The group discussed ethics and psychology of trust in the context of the Toolkit. It was noted that a cultivation of distrust in untrustworthy material was as important as boosting trust in verified sources. The group also discussed the potential application of the toolkit to other target groups. The group noted The Journal's work in relation to certain types of disinformation, including a hotline that was set up during the pandemic to deal with Covid disinformation. Fabula AI was also mentioned in a discussion about how the development of artificial intelligence could both help and hinder the detection of disinformation.

The Chair thanked presenters for sharing their expertise with the group.

## **Draft minutes of 2nd Meeting**

The draft minutes of the second meeting were approved without amendment.

## **Strategy development discussion**

There was a discussion about the wider Strategy development. The following questions were posed to the group:

- How should the strategy be structured?
- What should arise from the strategy?
- What could oversight look like?

Secretariat outlined the main points of the strategy development process (sub-groups, public consultation) and associated milestones. The group discussed the feasibility of an implementation plan with actions or recommendations to be associated with principles in any draft Strategy. The Group noted that any Strategy should take account of existing legislation and regulation. "Our Rural Future" was mentioned as a possible model and Secretariat undertook to circulate as an example, and revert with a possible approach for the Group to agree.

## **Subgroup updates**

The Chair outlined the three main objectives of subgroup reports, namely:

1. Overall context in which the subgroup's work lies
2. Recommendations from the subgroups for potential inclusion in the Strategy

### 3. Questions for potential inclusion in the public consultation

**Subgroup 1** outlined the scope of their work, focusing on counter measures and their known benefits.

**Subgroup 2** summarised the key issues identified so far. AI generated disinformation and the impact of recommender systems on disinformation circulation were both highlighted, alongside alternative platforms that do not agree to self-regulation.

**Subgroup 3** focused on the Future of Media Commission recommendations and how they might overlap with the National Counter Disinformation Strategy. It was stated that more work needs to be done on the area of safeguards for and access to public interest information.

With Secretariat support, it is envisaged that sub-groups will develop a joint executive summary of the three reports for consideration by the Working Group.

#### **A.O.B.**

There were no matters arising under AOB.

#### **Next meeting of Working Group**

The next meeting of the Working Group was proposed for Thursday 25 May.

NCDS Secretariat

20/04/2023