

INFODEMIC MANAGEMENT

Sustainability Fact Sheet

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At the same time as we are experiencing a pandemic, the world is also experiencing an “**infodemic**”. An infodemic arises when there is an overabundance of information (some accurate and some not) that occurs during an epidemic. It spreads between humans in a similar manner to an epidemic, via digital and physical information systems. In that situation, fake news and rumours (**misinformation**) appear on the scene, along with manipulation of information with doubtful or deliberately bad intent (**disinformation**). This makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it. Infodemics can impact citizens in every country. Addressing them is a new and important challenge in responding to health threats.

PHIRI, the **Population Health Information Research Infrastructure**, believes that the identification of best practices for handling health threats at public health and clinical management level should also include the response to the infodemic. In this regard, PHIRI actively organised different activities to discover experiences, lessons learned and good practices regarding the management of the COVID-19 infodemic and build resilience to mis/disinformation in citizens.

WHY PERFORMING INFODEMIC MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES?

Addressing infodemic management, during crises and beyond, is essential for several reasons:

1. **Protecting health:** In times of crises, accurate information is vital for effective public health measures, such as vaccination campaigns or containment strategies.
2. **Maintaining trust:** Effective infodemic management helps maintain trust in institutions, such as government agencies and healthcare providers, crucial for building trust in peace time and implement effective response efforts during crises.
3. **Preventing panic:** During crises, mis/ disinformation can exacerbate panic and confusion, leading to harmful behaviours in citizens and distrust in authorities.
4. **Preventing social division:** Mis/disinformation can exacerbate social divisions by spreading falsehoods that target specific groups and perpetuate stereotypes.
5. **Promoting health literacy:** Infodemic management initiatives can promote critical thinking skills in citizens, empowering them to discern reliable information from falsehoods. This is important not only during crises but also in everyday life as it can help individuals to navigate the abundance of information available in our society and make more informed decisions about their health and well-being.

INFODEMIC MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

Since the conception of PHIRI, a variety of activities related to infodemic management have been successfully performed; these range from webinars, to publications, to training workshops, to top level meetings and a variety of others. Such events targeted a wide range audience including but not limited to junior specialists, experts, public health professionals and decision- makers. Find the full list of events on the [PHIRI website!](#)

PHIRI INFODEMIC MANAGEMENT ONLINE LIBRARY

We set up an online repository of interesting resources, (scientific papers, news articles, tools) related to infodemic and infodemic management ad many related topics: social listening, health communication, health literacy etc: www.scoop.it/topic/infodemic



WHO TRAINING IN INFODEMIC MANAGEMENT

In order to **successfully address and mitigate** the current infodemic and promote more effective future response, the WHO organized a **full infodemic management training** to support the country pandemic preparedness. The PHIRI coordination team had the opportunity to join the training and connect with 254 people from 117 countries to develop further their understating in infodemic management and continue in the development of infodemic activities within the PHIRI project. Read more about the training [here](#).

INFODEMIC MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

This workshop aimed to gather and present **experiences, lessons learned and good practices on infodemic management during the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe**. Infodemic management has been approached in many different ways in the European countries, depending on their capacity, the resources and the institutions involved. **What worked/did not? What tools were useful? What could be done to be prepared for the next crisis? Find all the presentations, recordings and much more in the dedicated 'Goodie bag'.**



FACT-CHECKING COVID-19 WORKSHOP

Experts with different backgrounds (from masters of big data to journalists) presented **key contemporary topics** where communicating science to the general public is essential but not an easy task. Sequentially, experts from the University of Liverpool and the University of Dundee introduced the [Vaccinating News chatbot](#) – a tool which aims to increase **resistance to mis/disinformation in citizens** by teaching them how to spot fallacies and identify **deceptive or misleading stories**. Learn more and watch the recording of the event [here](#).



WORKSHOP AT THE EUROPEAN HEALTH FORUM GASTEIN (EHFG) 2021

A workshop at the EHFG covered the topic of misinformation in a broader framework. The question is, **does health data help to prevent mis- and disinformation or does it broaden the scope?** Or do we simply fail at communicating the right messages? The PHIRI workshop at the EHFG. The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

RAPID EXCHANGE FORUM

The [Rapid Exchange Forum \(REF\)](#) offers a structured platform for exchange of policy advisors, commission services and researchers of altogether 31 countries (thereof 28 PHIRI partners) and 11 international organisations (e.g. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)...) addressing urgent questions and current developments in population health during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Each meeting is organized around a topic or set of topics of timely relevance to the participating countries, and answers to the questions are shared during the meeting as well as in writing immediately before or after the meetings. Given the urgency and relevance of the topic, a REF meeting was dedicated to infodemic management, which supported countries to identify national initiatives and learn from best practices of neighboring countries.

WHAT IS NEXT?

Continuing to work on infodemic management is crucial in the current global context. Mis/disinformation can undermine public health efforts to disseminate accurate information and guidance, making it difficult for individuals to make informed decisions about their health. PHIRI recognises the importance of integrating infodemic management into public health and clinical practices, and it will continue to organise and promote various to create capacity in the countries and combat mis/disinformation. Therefore, PHIRI is organising the second edition of the **Spring School on Health Information** and with the collaboration and support of WHO, one of its key blocks will be dedicated to infodemic management. [Register now!](#)

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