

PHIRI

Population Health Information
Research Infrastructure

Workshop on addressing the COVID-19 population health infodemic

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Executive summary

At the same time as we are experiencing a pandemic, the world is also experiencing an “infodemic”: 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 this 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, and addressing them is a new and centrally important challenge in responding to disease outbreaks. At the same time, the current COVID-19 infodemic is an opportunity to find and adapt new preparedness and response tools. WHO's Information Network for Epidemic (EPI-WIN) took the lead in this effort and provides resources, guidance and regular updates on their [website](#). PHIRI (the Population Health Information Research Infrastructure) has made it one of her aims to address the COVID-19 population health infodemic. Therefore, in close collaboration with relevant partners, a workshop was organised in June 2021.

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 was tried? What worked/did not? What was difficult? What profiles were involved in infodemic management or should have been more involved? What tools were useful? What could be done to be prepared for the next crisis? These are some of the main questions that were addressed with the help of our speakers coming from different European countries with different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. Each speaker highlighted their national infodemic management experience and then discussed with the other speakers and the audience. Some practical tools and exercises for infodemic management were also introduced.

PHIRI: Workshop on addressing the COVID-19 population health infodemic

Created by Sciensano (Barthélémy Moreau de Lizoreux, Petronille Bogaert, Nienke Schutte, Miriam Saso)

Reviewed by SpFrance

Approved by

Attendees day 1

- Number of participants: 62
- Number of countries: 17
- Number of international organisations: 8
- Number of participants where it was not possible to determine the country of origin: 6

Agenda day 1

Speakers & topics DAY 1 - 9 June 2021:

- **Petronille Bogaert**, Sciensano: **"Welcome to the PHIRI infodemic management workshop."**
- **Christine Czerniak**, WHO: **"Introduction to the key concepts of infodemic management."**
- **Rebecca Winkels**, Wissenschaft im Dialog (Science in Dialogue), Germany.
- **Giovanni Zagni**, Pagella Politica, Italy: **"Scaling up the efforts: Fact-checking in Italy during the pandemic."**
- **Leonardo Heyerdahl**, Institut Pasteur, France: **"Opportunities and challenges of blending online and offline social listening of infodemics."**
- **Stefan Mandic-Rajcevic**, Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade, Serbia: **"Ups and downs on infodemic management in Serbia."**
- **Vitalba Crivello**, European Science Media Hub: **"ESMH: knowledge-based science communication to tackle the infodemic."**
- **Tina Purnat**, ECDC: Leading and moderation of the discussion.
- **Laura Espinosa**, ECDC: Presentation of the Epi tweeter tool.

1. Introduction, welcome words and presenting PHIRI

Petronille Bogaert (Sciensano) - DAY 1 (09 June 2021)

Petronille Bogaert is a project researcher and head of unit EU health information systems at Sciensano. Her work primarily focuses on European projects facilitating research in the area of population health information. This includes the coordination of the Population Health Information

Research Infrastructure for COVID-19 ([PHIRI](#)) and the Joint Action on Health Information ([InfAct](#)). She is also leading several activities in the Joint Action Towards the European Health Data Space ([TEHDAS](#)) and [HealthyCloud](#). She holds a double Master degree in European Public Health and a Masters in Biomedical Sciences. She is also president of the EUPHA section on Public Health Monitoring and Reporting.

Watch the full presentation [here](#).

2. Introduction to the key concepts of Infodemic Management

Christine Czerniak (World Health Organisation) - DAY 1 (09 June 2021)

Christine Czerniak is strategist and Technical Lead for Infodemic Management within the Infectious Hazards Management Department at World Health Organisation. She supports countries in emergency preparedness and response to address the COVID-19 pandemic, infodemic, and emerging health threats.

Watch the full presentation [here](#).

3. Approach COVID & Science communication – Reaching the undecided

Rebecca Winkels (Wissenschaft im Dialog) - DAY 1 (09 June 2021)

Rebecca Winkels is qualified biologist and science journalist. She is the Director of Communications and Strategy at Wissenschaft im Dialog (Science in Dialogue), the joint organisation of German science for science communication. During the pandemic the platform has covered special issues on crisis communication, science communication in times of the pandemic, and health communication, to foster the dialogue about these topics among science communicators in Germany.

Watch the full presentation [here](#).

4. Scaling up the efforts: Fact-checking in Italy during the pandemic

Giovanni Zagi (Pagella Politica/Facta.news) - DAY 1 (09 June 2021)

Giovanni Zagni is editor-in-chief of Pagella Politica, the main Italian fact-checking website. He recently created another fact-checking website called Facta.news, mostly populated to non-political and especially COVID-19 topics. As journalist, he was nominated member of the Monitoring Unit on Disinformation around COVID-19 established by the Italian government in April 2020. He is also part of the Executive board of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO).

Watch the full presentation [here](#).

5. Opportunities and challenges of blending online and offline social listening of infodemics

Léonard Heyerdahl (Institut Pasteur) - DAY 1 (09 June 2021)

Leonardo Heyerdahl is a social scientist focused on epidemics research. At Institut Pasteur and in collaboration with the Red Cross and the European RECOVER project, Leonardo is developing and implementing hybrid methods spanning from computational social science to ethnographic fieldwork to characterize, measure the impact, and act upon infodemics during the COVID-19 pandemic in several European countries.

Watch the full presentation [here](#).

6. Ups and downs of infodemic management in Serbia.

Stefan Mandic-Rajcevic (Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade) - DAY 1 (09 June 2021)

Stefan Mandic-Rajcevic has graduated from the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Belgrade (Serbia) and went on to do a Ph.D. in Occupational Medicine and Industrial Hygiene at the University of Milan (Italy). His main interests lie in Public Health, Occupational Medicine, Toxicology, Exposure and Risk Assessment, Modelling, Risk Communication and Data Analysis.

Watch the full presentation [here](#).

7. European Science Media Hub: knowledge-based science communication to tackle the infodemic.

Vitalba Crivello (European Science Media Hub) - DAY 1 (09 June 2021)

Vitalba Crivello is a Science Policy and Science Communication expert at the European Science-Media Hub. She has been working in Brussels since 2005, covering different Policy, Project and Communication roles within the EU Institutions, with a focus on Research and Innovation Policy.

Watch the full presentation [here](#).

8. Epi tweetr: Early warning tool using Twitter data.

Laura Espinosa (ECDC) - DAY 1 (09 June 2021)

Laura Espinosa is a public health veterinarian with experience in programming and artificial intelligence. Currently, she works at the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) as Scientific Officer Epidemic Intelligence. She supports the continuous development and strengthening of epidemic intelligence activities within ECDC, leading the automation, improvement and maintenance of procedures and practices such as the development of the R-based tool for early detection of public health threats using Twitter data (epitweetr).

Watch the full presentation [here](#).

Attendees day 2

- Number of participants: 69
- Number of countries: 20
- Number of international organisations: 9
- Number of participants where it was not possible to determine the country of origin: 11

Agenda day 2

Speakers & topics DAY 2 - 16 June 2021:

- **Petronille Bogaert**, Sciensano: **"Welcome to the PHIRI infodemic management workshop."**
- **Tina Purnat**, ECDC: **"Introduction to the key concepts of infodemic management."** & moderation of the discussion.
- **Anna-Leena Lohiniva**, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), Finland.
- **Jolanta Bilinska**, Patients Safety Foundation, Poland: **"Good practice & information about the Covid-19 pandemic in Poland."**
- **Jose Alcamí Pertejo**, ISCIII, Spain: **"From papers to media, lessons from the pandemics and infodemics."**
- **Claudia Dima**, National Institute of Public Health, Romania: **"The Green Phone - a risk communication tool in the COVID-19 pandemic."**
- **Sara Rubinelli**, University of Lucerne: **"Interdisciplinarity in infodemic management - a focus on WHO competency framework."**
- **Laura Garcia & Marie Bohner**, First Draft: **"How to spot online vaccine misinformation narratives."** Workshop session.

1. Health Misinformation and infodemics: a systems perspective

Tina Purnat (ECDC) - DAY 2 (16 June 2021)

Tina Purnat is Principal Expert in eHealth and Digital Innovations for Public Health at ECDC. Tina has worked at the intersection of health research, analysis and policy-making with an emphasis on digital health and health information systems. Most recently, she worked at WHO on frameworks for assessment and evaluation of AI and other digital health technologies in health. She also worked on health information exchange and interoperability, and related aspects of health data governance for sharing, research and use in policy-making. As part of the WHO COVID-19 response, she worked in developing and formulating WHO infodemic response and infodemic management interventions, for which she received the WHO Pathfinder and Innovation Award 2021. She is also a member of EUPHA public health monitoring and reporting and digital health sections. During our workshop, Tina is present here in her own personal capacity and is not representing the views of ECDC.

Watch the full presentation [here](#).

2. Monitoring pandemic related perceptions of the public

Anna-leena Lohiniva (THL) - DAY 2 (16 June 2021)

Anna-Leena Lohiniva is supporting COVID-19 response in Finland within the Finnish Institute for health and Welfare (THL) by initiating and managing a COVID-19 related social listening system, conducting operational research (COVID-19 related stigma and discrimination, and IPC practices), rapid investigations to vaccine hesitancy. She is also a specialist in behaviour change communication.

Watch the full presentation [here](#).

3. Good practice & information about the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland

Jolanta Bilinska (Patients Safety Foundation) - DAY 2 (16 June 2021)

Jolanta Bilinska is director of Development and Social Communication at City Medical Centre dr. K. Jonscher in Lodz and lecturer at High School for Nurses in Kalisz. Mostly interested in matters relating to patients' rights and patients' awareness of the health care system. Since 2005 she has been the champion leader in World Alliance for Patient Safety. In 2006, she established the Patient Safety Foundation. Its main aim is to promote safety measures in health service as well as to involve patients in the process of treatment. She was also a IAPO (International Alliance of Patients Organizations) chair of the board from 2015– 2018.

Watch the full presentation [here](#).

4. From papers to media, lessons from the pandemics and infodemics

Jose Alcamí Pertejo (ISCIII) - DAY 2 (16 June 2021)

Jose Alcamí Pertejo directs the AIDS Immunopathology Unit at the National Centre for Microbiology within the Carlos III Health Institute. Since the global pandemic of COVID-19, he is also the coordinator of the Scientific Analysis Group on Coronavirus, in charge of writing scientific and technical reports on prevention, diagnosis, treatment and management of the virus and the disease. Dr Alcamí works very actively in dissemination in science through social networks like Twitter and Youtube.

Watch the full presentation [here](#).

5. The Green Phone in Romania: a risk communication tool in the COVID-19 pandemic

Claudia Dima (National Institute of Public Health, Romania) - DAY 2 (16 June 2021)

Claudia Dima is Senior Public Health and Management MD, Ph.D., Head of Health Promotion and Health Education Service at the National Institute of Public Health, Romania. Her public health-related activities mainly focus on health information, education, communication of different target groups, including population, health professionals, and policymakers. She worked in the process of information, education, and risk communication about COVID-19.

Watch the full presentation [here](#).

6. Interdisciplinarity in infodemic management. A focus on WHO competency framework

Sara Rubinelli (University of Lucerne) - DAY 2 (16 June 2021)

Sara Rubinelli is Professor in Health Sciences with a focus in health communication at the Department of Health Sciences and Medicine of the University of Lucerne. Her main research and teaching topics include: interpersonal communication, (health) behaviour change, social marketing and health campaigns, society in the information age, communication for education, empowerment and personal growth. She is past-President of the European Association for Communication in Healthcare (EACH). She is currently working as an expert for WHO on the creation of a competency framework for infodemic management.

Watch the full presentation [here](#).

7. How to spot online vaccine misinformation narratives

Marie Bohner & Laura Garcia (First Draft) - DAY 2 (16 June 2021)

First Draft works through trainings, collaborative projects and research to empower people with a knowledge, an understanding and the tools to build resilience against harmful, false and misleading information.

Watch the full presentation [here](#).

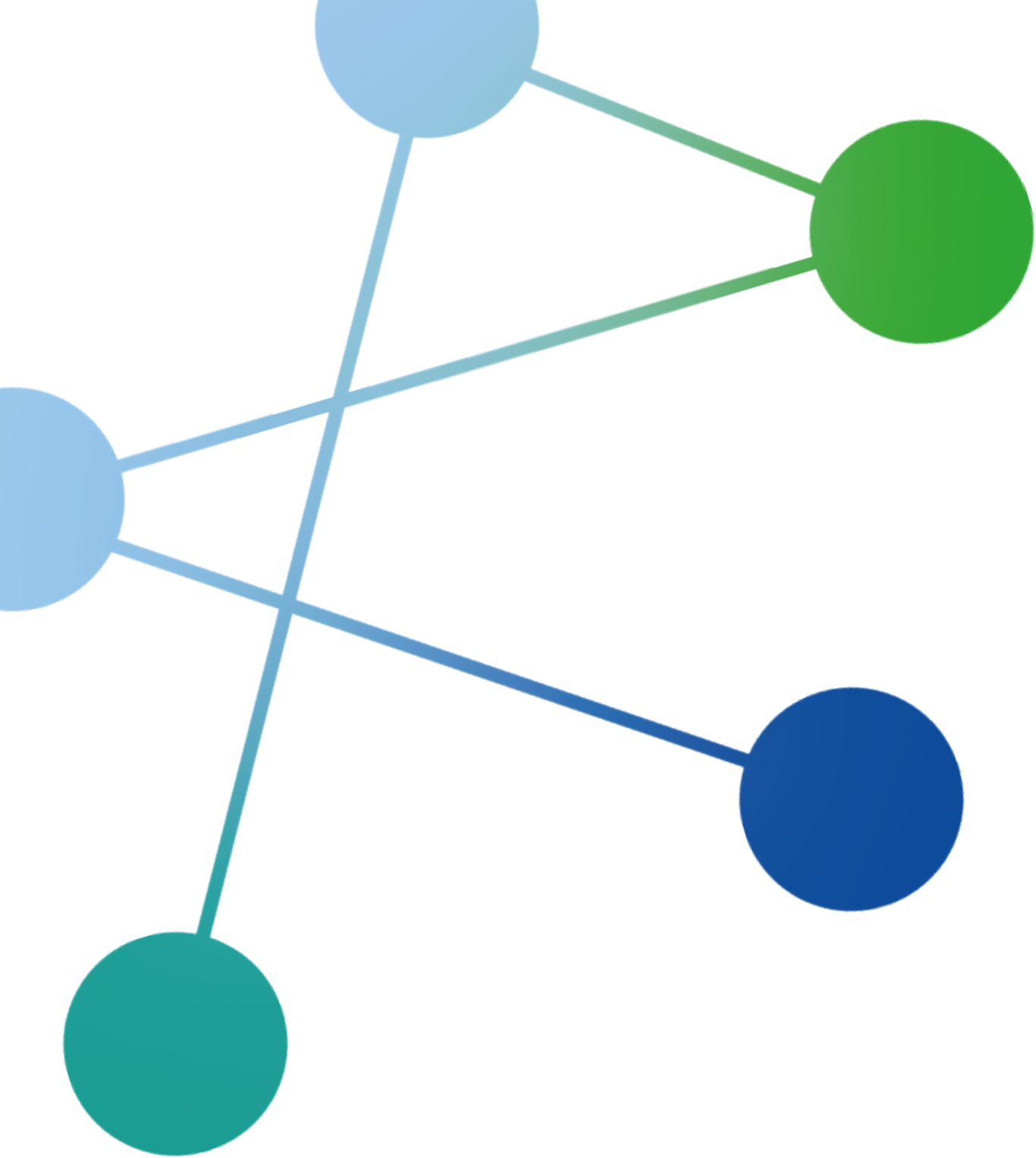
8. Additional material

Please find all the additional material of the 2-days workshop [here](#).

Disclaimer

Disclaimer excluding Agency and Commission responsibility

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