

Enterprise Deep Dive: Managing disinformation

Environmental driver description

Trust and confidence are core to enabling both participation in democracy and the social mandate for those elected. Some researchers are claiming that trust and confidence in institutions is eroding. This is combined with increasing levels of mis and disinformation.

5 Sep
2023

Establishing Context

What is the risk that the Board specifically need to be concerned about?

Disinformation is a systemic issue, and not all of it is within EC's control. The Board is likely to be interested in:

1. How mis- and disinformation is impacting our legislative responsibilities.
2. How the Commission is ensuring that correct information re: voting and the election is being made available
3. In relation to the wider system, what awareness and connections does EC have to identify and mitigate the impacts on the system we operate within

Key data

International Idea study - overall increase in mis- and disinformation.
Most disinformation attacks are being launched during the electoral campaign (33%) and voting operations and elections day (24%).
[The Information Environment around Elections | International IDEA](#)
Escalated by social fragmentation and reduced trust in institutions of government.

How may this risk or issue impact us?

- Lower participation rates
- Unless proportionate action taken to manage impact of disinformation, EC won't be seen as doing its job
- Lack of awareness of trend and how it is impacting our society means we won't be prepared or able to take appropriate action to complete our mandate effectively and efficiently.

Key factors that influence our success in this space (internal and external)

- Prevalence and type of mis- and disinformation.
- How we communicate and connect with the communities we serve.
- How we react/respond to mis and disinformation about the electoral process
- Reputation of EC (as a trusted, neutral source of truth).

Commission activities

Key area 1

Understanding mis and disinformation environment

Parts of business / project involved, what they have considered, and the goals they wish to realise. Summarise key activities being undertaken to prepare, address or respond.

Staff involved: ELT, Comms, Security Advisor, election delivery leaders
Considered: Roles in system, intelligence sources, overall trends
Goals: Despite dispersed accountabilities across the system, we will have a joined-up view of mis- and dis information.
Activities:

- Overall trust environment and participation with public sector system partners i.e. DPMC trust working group
- Links with academics and commentators
- Strategy work (and others) look at global trends
- Monitoring themes across media and social media
- Senior Officials Committee and Risk and Security working group
- Communication of key messages to the public and communities
- Discussion with other Electoral Management Bodies
- Board meetings with CEs of related system agencies

Key area 2

Getting right messaging and information

Staff involved: Comms, SEP, VS
Considered: not repeating misinformation when correcting, ensuring accessible messages, ability to quickly respond, proactively informing the public about integrity of system
Goals: The public rely on the information from the Commission as the 'source of truth'.
Activities:
SEP – understanding community misunderstandings and correcting.
Accurate and accessible info on our services and how the process works
Good data (ours) that's substantiable
Trust and security strategy is underpinned by a deliberate Electoral Integrity plan for the election:

- Proactive engagement with media to establish that EC is source of the facts, correct any misinformation
- Public engagement - including heavy social media focus
- Pre- bunking and information sharing about elements of the electoral process- providing resources that can be shared
- Pre-prepared FAQs

Key area 3

Ensuring information gets to where it needs to go

Staff involved: Comms, Legal and Policy, ELT
Considered: passing on intel as well as receiving it, maintaining networks, clarifying our role
Goals: We work across the system to share information and support the public.
Activities:

- Publishing information on our role and who to contact for what issues
- Broadcasters and publishers guidance
- Networks of agencies across the sector
- Social media company briefings

Monitoring

What visibility has the Board had of key programmes and how the risk is being dealt with?

- Misinformation briefing – September 2022 followed by trust framework updates and Trust and Security plans
- Overarching Communications Strategy and Public Information and Education Strategy for the 2023 General Election
- Integrity communications plan (subset of the above)
- Monitoring through the Commission's risk profile

How does management monitor and maintain confidence in these areas?
How is success monitored?
What is the trend?

- Intelligence from other system agencies
- Comprehensive plans and products prepared
- Weekly discussions at ELT on risk and media/social media content
- Risk profile updates
- Will be monitored through the GEDT and through Risk and Security Operations group

What key information or milestones will trigger action?

- News reporting
- Social media commentary
- Complaints
- Reports from Community engagement teams or key partners
- Alerts from other agencies

Overview any gaps?