False Information / Misinformation / Disinformation / Conspiracy Theories

False information is not a new phenomenon, but its impact today is greater than ever. To respond effectively, we need to be **clear** about the different forms it takes.

📖 Clear definitions matter:

ℹ️ **False Information** ➜ A catch-all term that includes **misinformation**, **disinformation**, and **conspiracy theories**.

❌ **Misinformation** ➜ False or misleading information that is shared without the **intent to deceive**.

📢 **Disinformation** ➜ False information **deliberately created** and spread to deceive or **manipulate**.

🎯 **Conspiracy Theories** ➜ Narratives that suggest powerful groups secretly manipulate events behind the scenes, often blaming minorities or institutions.

📊 What research shows:

🌐 **False information** **fuels echo chambers,** where extremist or polarized views go unchallenged.

💣 **Extremist groups** spread **disinformation** and conspiracy **theories** to gain visibility and influence.

👥 **Minority groups** are often scapegoated, **increasing hate crimes** and discrimination.

💡 What can we do?

✅ **Promote education** and critical **literacy** so people can assess sources.

✅ Use **counterspeech**—fact-based **narratives** that directly challenge harmful claims.

✅ **Demand accountability** from tech **platforms** that allow harmful content to spread.

✅ **Build societal resilience** through dialogue, inclusion, and civic participation.

Sources:
1) Cox, K., Ogden, T., Jordan, V. & Paille, P. (2021). COVID-19, Disinformation and Hateful Extremism. Cambridge, UK. RAND Europe. https://www.rand.org/pubs/external_publications/EP68674.html
2) Vraga, E. K. & Bode, L. (2020). Defining misinformation and understanding its bounded nature: Using expertise and evidence for describing misinformation. PoliticalCommunication, 37(1), 136-144.