

EU CODE OF PRACTICE ON DISINFORMATION 2022

## Subscription Document for Signatory Debunk.org

## Name of the Signatory

*Legal name: Debunk EU, Vsl*

*Brand name: Debunk.org*

## About the Signatory

Debunk.org is an independent technology think tank and NGO that carries out disinformation analysis and runs educational media literacy campaigns in 8 countries. The organisation has worked in the disinformation countering field since 2017.

Our team publishes 100+ reports per year focusing on false and misleading coverage regarding the [migration crisis](#) on the EU border with Belarus, [COVID-19](#), [NATO](#), [hybrid warfare](#), [energy politics](#), and monitoring [elections](#).

In 2022, Debunk.org was a part of the **Ukraine War Disinfo Work Group**, which unites NGO's and research centres from 14 countries and provides [weekly reports](#) on disinformation spread by the Kremlin about its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Recently, Debunk.org started a **cooperation with Vilnius University** and established the [Baltic Disinformation Observatory](#), the main goal of which is to carry out multidisciplinary research into this topic. Moreover, Debunk.org successfully **worked together with Lithuanian public broadcaster LRT** on an [investigation](#) of disinformation actors active on Facebook.

The organisation also participates in activities organised by the [Radicalisation Awareness Network](#) (RAN Practitioners), which connects frontline practitioners from across Europe to exchange knowledge, first-hand experiences, and approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism in all its forms.

Notably, Debunk.org was also included amongst top leaders in the RoW100 list:

<https://restofworld.org/profile/viktoras-dauksas/> <https://restofworld.org/row100/>

As for **media literacy activities**, in 2021 Debunk.org launched the [Civic Resilience Course](#), which is now available in Lithuania and Montenegro. In 90 minutes, students are provided with basic skills of source and content analysis which help to bolster their critical thinking.

**Lithuania has been a leader in countering disinformation** for more than a decade. In 2022, the incredible creatives from the Dutch public broadcaster made a [documentary](#) about disinformation countering efforts in the country, featuring Debunk.org alongside NFIU Lithuania, Lithuanian Armed forces, and the grassroots movement of volunteer fact-checkers “elves”.

IV. Integrity of Services (to be removed if the signatory is not taking commitments/measures from this chapter)		
List of adopted commitments and measures <sup>1</sup>		Qualitative reporting elements and service level indicators <sup>2</sup>
<u>Commitment 4</u>	<u>Measure 4.1</u>	<u>QRE 4.1.1</u>
	<u>Measure 4.2</u>	<u>QRE 4.1.2</u>
<u>Commitment 12</u>	<u>Measure 12.1</u>	<u>QRE 12.1.1</u>
	<u>Measure 12.2</u>	<u>QRE 12.1.1</u>
	<u>Measure 12.3</u>	<u>QRE 12.1.1</u>
<u>Commitment 13</u>	<u>Measure 13.1</u>	<u>QRE 13.1.1</u>
	<u>Measure 13.2</u>	<u>QRE 13.1.1</u>

<sup>1</sup> Text of the commitments/measures as per Code of Practice or adapted to be more relevant or proportionate

<sup>2</sup> Each commitment / measure to be accompanied by either a Qualitative Reporting Element and/or quantitative Service Level Indicator as per Code of Practice or adapted to be more relevant or proportionate

	<u>Measure 13.3</u>	<u>QRE 13.1.1</u>
<u>Commitment 16</u>	<u>Measure 16.1</u>	<u>QRE 16.1.1 and SLI 16.1.1</u>
	<u>Measure 16.2</u>	<u>QRE 16.1.2</u>
<u>Commitment 17</u>	<u>Measure 17.2</u>	<u>QRE 17.2.1 and SLI 17.2.1</u>
	<u>Measure 17.3</u>	<u>QRE 17.3.1</u>
<u>Commitment 29</u>	<u>Measure 29.1</u>	<u>QRE 29.1.1</u> <u>QRE 29.1.2</u> <u>QRE 29.1.3</u> <u>SLI 29.1.1</u>
	<u>Measure 29.1</u>	<u>QRE 29.2.1</u> <u>QRE 29.2.2</u> <u>QRE 29.2.3</u> <u>SLI 29.2.1</u>
<u>Commitment 35</u>	<u>Measures 35.1 - 35.6</u>	<u>QRE 36.1.1 (for the Commitments 34-36)</u> <u>QRE 36.1.2 (for the Commitments 34-36)</u> <u>SLI 36.1.1 (for the Commitments 34-36)</u>
<u>Commitment 36</u>	<u>Measures 36.1 - 36.3</u>	<u>QRE 36.1.1 (for the Commitments 34-36)</u> <u>QRE 36.1.2 (for the Commitments 34-36)</u> <u>SLI 36.1.1 (for the Commitments 34-36)</u>

<u>Commitment 37</u>	<u>Measure 37.1</u>	
	<u>Measure 37.2</u>	
<u>Commitment 39</u>		
<u>Commitment 40</u>	<u>Measures 40.1 - 40.6</u>	
<u>Commitment 42</u>		
<u>Commitment 43</u>		

**Provide reasoning for the choice of commitments and measures, as well as future plans (if applicable)**

*[Provide narrative description of what circumstances and proportionality considerations guide the signatory's choice on the commitments and measures signing up to, including – where relevant - a general reasoning why the other commitments and measures of the chapter have not been signed (yet) (i.e. not appropriate/proportionate). Where applicable, give an indication of which commitments/measures might be under the service's consideration for signature in the future.]*

**Commitment 4 (Measures 4.1 and 4.2), Commitment 12 (Measures 12.1, 12.2, and 12.3) and Commitment 13 (Measures 13.1, 13.2, and 13.3)** were chosen because as an organisation that researches disinformation, we see a growing issue of hostile actors, known for spreading disinformation, paying for political and issue ads on social media. For example, [research](#) conducted by our analysts in 2020 about the Lithuanian Parliamentary elections has shown that part of agitational ads, which were not marked as political ads, were posted and sponsored by private persons who were neither candidates nor members of a political party. Some of them are well known for operating disinformation channels and engaging in other dubious activities. Therefore, clearly defining what political and issue ads are, improving policies regulating these ads, and researching topics related to political and issue ads will potentially minimise the risk of hostile actors exploiting advertising on social media to spread disinformation and help create effective response guidelines if such risks materialise.

**Commitment 16 (Measures 16.1 and 16.2), Commitment 29 (Measures 29.1 and 29.2) and Commitment 37 (Measures 37.1 and 37.2)** were chosen because inter-institutional information sharing is one of the best practices in countering

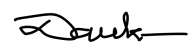
disinformation. As practitioners working in the disinformation countering field, we strongly believe in institutional cooperation, as it not only increases efficiency, but also helps building transparency. Creating a unified, efficient process for institutions from both government and private sector to share their data and findings will undoubtedly increase the capacity of the European Union and its partners to respond to foreign influence operations and prevent the emergence of new ones. Debunk.org has experience in this area, as in the past year the organisation worked closely with the Lithuanian Government, which has proven to be very successful in both launching public initiatives and providing training to staff members. Moreover, Debunk.org has reported multiple actors spreading disinformation directly to the platforms, such as Meta and YouTube, which led to a faster closure of accounts, groups, pages, and channels.

**Commitment 17 (Measures 17.3 and 17.3)** was chosen because a large portion of Debunk.org's work involves media literacy projects. Because the organisation originated in Lithuania and expanded in the Baltics, constant attempts by the Russian Federation to manipulate the public and threaten the democratic values were evident for years. Moreover, recent examples, such as the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol, showcase how misleading and false information can manifest itself on the ground - not only on social media news feeds. Lastly, researchers have been raising the alarm over the last couple of years about the younger demographic being overconfident with their ability to spot fakes online, which is problematic, because overconfident people tend not to think critically and therefore become more susceptible to disinformation. Therefore, increasing the attention on media literacy should become a priority, because a resilient society is essential to guarantee the survival of democracy.

**Commitment 42 and Commitment 43** are also related to building inter-institutional cooperation, hence, as it was stressed previously, it is a priority for Debunk.org to work in this direction and become members of the Taskforce.

*Signature*

Viktoras Dauksas

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dauksas', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

*Date and place*

2023 04 14, Vilnius