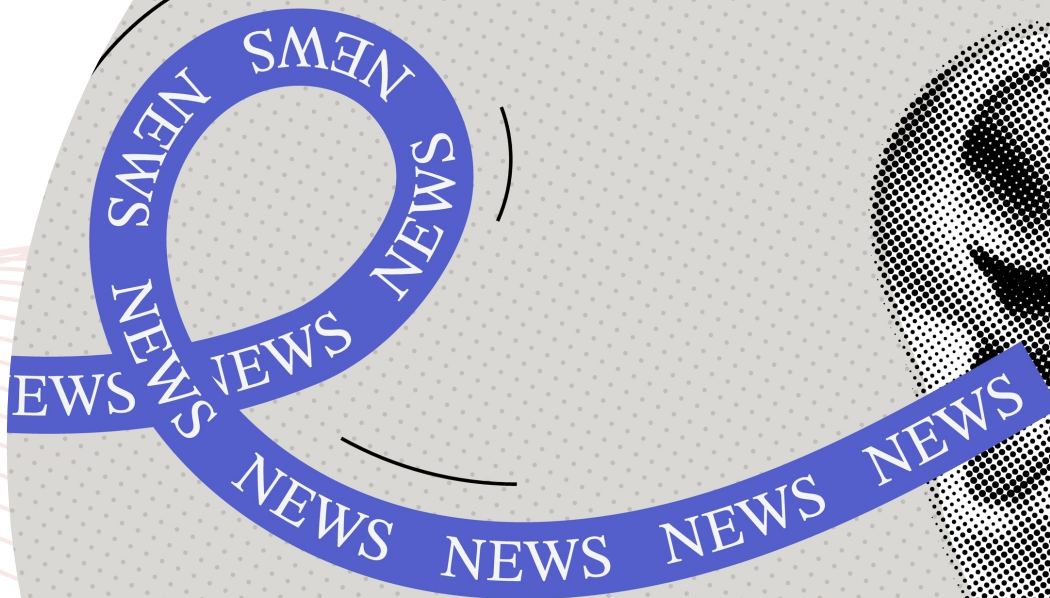


TRUTH IN TRANSITION. A TOOLKIT FOR COUNTERING CLIMATE MISINFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

The increasing spread of misinformation has become a significant challenge to the implementation and public reception of EU policies, particularly in climate-related areas. This policy study explores the intersection of misinformation and policy communication, focusing on the Common Agricultural Policy. The study aims to investigate how misinformation shapes public perceptions and resistance to climate policies and to develop strategic recommendations for more effective policy communication. Utilising case study analysis, the research will provide actionable insights for EU policymakers.

Keywords: Common Agricultural Policy, European Green Deal, misinformation, disinformation, climate policy, media literacy, public trust, policy communication, fake news

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KEY MESSAGES OF THE POLICY STUDY

- **The climate crisis as a top threat and disinformation/misinformation as potential multipliers:** Europe is the fastest-warming continent, with 2024 the warmest year on record so far, and climate-related extreme events have already caused economic losses of around €738 billion in the EU since 1980. As the need for urgent action to save the environment and halt climate change grows, false content about climate policies is widely circulated on social media, eroding public trust in institutions and scientific knowledge.
- **What makes disinformation so impactful:** A relatively small group of extremely active online users (“supersharers”) drive a disproportionate amount of false news about climate policy, often unrepresentative of the wider public, with many people becoming unwitting carriers of this misinformation. Especially when the disinformation aligns with their pre-existing beliefs or economic concerns, combined with repeated exposure to these narratives, it erodes trust in public authorities and the legitimacy of institutional action. Furthermore, political groups and parties positioned against EU climate policy easily bandwagon on these trends for their campaigns.
- **Cases where this has become apparent:** Several initiatives to protect the environment and biodiversity have been derailed for reasons such as the above; in a case in point, the EU Nature Restoration Act was almost derailed by false claims – such as accusations that it would force farmers to set aside 10% of their land or violate property rights – that were amplified by those who opposed the legislation. Conversely, farmers’ protests across Europe in 2023-24 and the European Green Deal have been the target of widespread false narratives, often presented as threats to national sovereignty or economic survival.
- **Why disinformation prevailed:** In these cases, disinformation about climate policy found a foothold in the complexity of the policy, with the details and terminology facilitating the spread of false perceptions and information. Of course, disinformation also met with pre-existing concerns about the future of rural populations and the challenges faced by the agricultural sector, influencing the perception of the social groups involved.
- **A holistic strategy to counter misinformation:** No single tool can completely eliminate climate disinformation – a combination of approaches is needed with rapid action, multi-stakeholder coordination (active citizens, politicians and policymakers, civil society, academia and the media) and prompt fact-checking capabilities being crucial in the battle to correct false/misleading claims before they spread widely. At the same time, proactive “prebunking” initiatives that inoculate citizens by alerting them to common deception techniques before they encounter them should be the cornerstone of every strategic approach.

INTRODUCTION

Europe is already living through the climate crisis, and at speed. Europe is the fastest-warming continent, and 2024 was confirmed as its warmest year on record, with extreme heat and other impacts reinforcing a widening climate divide across regions. The costs are no longer abstract: according to the European Environment Agency¹, weather- and climate-related extremes have generated an estimated €738 billion in economic losses in the EU between 1980 and 2023, with a sharp concentration in recent years. This reality undermines both the EU's economic prospects and the tools available to achieve social cohesion, such as the European pillar of social rights², which places vulnerable communities and low-income households at the epicentre of its policies.

In this context, the EU's ability to design and implement climate policy depends on technical soundness, public trust and informed democratic debate. Yet the information environment around climate policy is increasingly contested. A growing share of citizens struggle to distinguish reliable information from false or manipulative content about climate change on social media – exposure that can weaken confidence in institutions and scientific expertise, amplify polarisation, and reduce support for fair and effective measures. For progressive actors, this is a governance challenge: without information integrity, the transition becomes easier to block, harder to implement, and more vulnerable to backlash over costs and fairness.

Moreover, the political economy of the transition matters as much as its environmental necessity. Recent farmers' mobilisations should not be read only as opposition to specific rules, but as a demand for recognition, income security and a fair distribution of transition costs. For progressives, this is core business: climate ambition will not hold without visible and concrete fairness for workers and

the communities most exposed to change. When these concerns are ignored, distrust grows and misinformation finds fertile ground; when they are addressed early and credibly, the transition becomes easier to implement and harder to weaponise.

Clear-cut and effective policy communication and the establishment of solid trust bonds between institutions and civil society are key for sustaining political stability; preventing uncertainty, distrust and alienation; and fostering resilience against misinformation. This policy study argues for a layered response that combines rapid rebuttal capacity with proactive public communication. It provides concrete recommendations and calls for a long-term strengthening of the interface between media and information literacy, as well as institutions and audiences, to build societal resilience and trust.

The issue of misinformation

The literature provides different operating definitions for the issues at stake. Misinformation indicates false or inaccurate information, including errors, misunderstandings or unverified content. Conversely, disinformation is defined by its intent to deceive the audience³. Disinformation necessarily features an element of deliberate intention, while misinformation may occur as a result of the incidental co-occurrence of different variables, without the intention to deceive the audience. The distinction between these two concepts is crucial: different problems require different solutions (Table 1). While misinformation can be challenged through a set of policies aimed at improving policy communication and preventing the spread of false information on a general level, disinformation may require a more strategic approach to counteract the deliberate challenge posed by specific actors.

Table 1. Misinformation versus disinformation: Key differentiators among these concepts.

Concept	Operating definition	Key distinguishing feature	Typical cases	Example of a tailored policy response
Misinformation	False information, which includes unintended inaccuracies or errors; unverified content; and/or misunderstandings	There is no intention to deceive	Mistakes when passing information, misinterpretation and/or sharing uncertain or unverified information	Strengthen public information campaigns, fact-checking and emphasis on policies that aim to reduce the spread of false information
Disinformation	False or inaccurate information that was shared with the intention to deceive the audience	Deliberate intention to deceive	Coordinated efforts by actors who seek to manipulate the public opinion	Identify and contain deliberate actors who strategically deceive the public. Counter-messaging, ad-hoc prebunking, platform enforcement, investigative monitoring

The spread of climate policy misinformation is a multifaceted problem shaped by actors that produce and amplify falsehoods, and the ways audiences process them. On the supply side, evidence suggests that a relatively small group of online “supersharers” can drive a disproportionate volume of false claims and is not representative of the broader population, but instead, over-representing specific demographics⁴. On the demand side, people who accept misinformation rarely do so out of a desire for disruption; more often, misleading claims are taken up because they fit pre-existing beliefs and identities. This perceived congruence lowers critical scrutiny and makes individuals more likely to absorb and repeat content passively within the continuous stream of online information⁵. For climate policy, this interaction matters: targeted high-volume amplification combines with belief-consistent narratives about costs, fairness or effectiveness, weakening trust and reducing receptiveness to evidence-based measures.

Poorly designed communication, such as unclear framing, inconsistent signals or overly technical language, can inadvertently widen the space in which climate policy misinformation circulates,

making public engagement in the transition harder rather than easier⁶. This dynamic is evident in contestation around climate mitigation policies, where misinformation fuels distrust⁷. Over time, repeated exposure to misleading narratives erodes confidence in public authorities and scientific expertise, weakening the perceived legitimacy of climate action and reducing support for long-term sustainability pathways.

A recent illustration is the mobilisation of European farmers in relation to the European Green Deal (EGD). In parts of this debate, claims that the EGD necessarily imposes unmanageable costs on food production have circulated, despite policy provisions that include support instruments and measures intended to protect producers in the transition from negative externalities⁸. When such narratives are strategically amplified, they are likely to distort the policy substance, undermine trust in EU decision-making and cause slow implementation. Given evidence that misinformation can reach substantial segments of the population⁹, strengthening climate policy communication and information integrity should be treated as a core element of effective climate governance.

Research points to a growing toolbox to prevent and respond to misinformation across the different stages of its diffusion¹⁰. Recent studies call for moving beyond strategies that primarily cultivate suspicion towards “bad actors”, and instead resorting to approaches that strengthen trust in credible institutions and increase the salience of reliable information, without inadvertently amplifying misleading frames¹¹.

Among the most cited preventive interventions is prebunking (or inoculation): short, targeted messages that expose common manipulation techniques before people encounter them. While promising, it must be deployed carefully to avoid contributing to broader climates of distrust¹². Debunking remains necessary, but it is structurally reactive and resource-intensive: automated fact-checking and large language model (LLM) assisted corrections can reduce false beliefs, yet they depend on high-quality human verification and governance safeguards, and the same tools can also be used to scale misinformation¹³. For more durable impact, evidence increasingly supports media and information literacy interventions, which can build more resilient information habits over time¹⁴.

For policymakers, the implication is practical: the most effective response is rarely a single “silver bullet”, but a layered strategy that combines a rapid correction capacity with the proactive communication of facts, clear framing of policy trade-offs and science communication practices that connect evidence to citizens’ lived concerns¹⁵. Climate policy misinformation and institutional communication reinforce each other in ways that shape how EU climate action is perceived and contested. A credible response must treat information integrity as a governance task, combining clearer policy communication with citizen-facing resilience measures, including media and information literacy, to sustain trust and democratic support for the transition.

Methodology

This policy study offers progressive policymakers a set of actionable recommendations to strengthen climate policy communication against misinformation. It draws on qualitative case studies of EU climate-related measures to identify how misleading narratives emerge, who amplifies them, and which institutional and civil society responses have proven most effective. Specifically, the study observes grassroots’ resistance to the EU’s Nature Restoration Law (NRL), the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the EGD. The analysis triangulates evidence from policy documents, investigative reporting, fact-checking outputs, and public statements by EU institutions and civil society organisations. This approach supports a structured assessment of recurring patterns and practical lessons for building public trust and improving the reception of climate policy.

CASE STUDY 1: THE EU NATURE RESTORATION LAW (NRL) AND THE COORDINATED RESPONSE

The NRL has become a defining test of the EU's ability to deliver on nature protection while sustaining democratic consent for the green transition. The law sets out to restore 20% of EU land and sea ecosystems by 2030 and to bring 90% of degraded habitats back to good condition by 2050¹⁶. Although adopted by a narrow majority¹⁷, the legislative process was shaped as much by political contestation as by a distorted information environment, in which misconceptions and misleading claims influenced public and stakeholder perceptions¹⁸.

A central line of attack framed the NRL as a direct threat to the agri-food sector. In the European Parliament, opposition figures described the proposal as "an attack on European agriculture, forestry and fisheries"¹⁹, echoing the European People's Party's (EPP's) broader resistance to the file²⁰. Crucially, the NRL debate illustrates how climate-and-nature files can become arenas where misinformation and disinformation converge: alongside widespread misunderstandings and simplifications circulating organically (misinformation), actors also advanced strategically framed and politically instrumental narratives designed to mobilise opposition and delay implementation (disinformation). This combination intensified polarisation and raised the political cost of evidence-based compromise. The misconceptions promoted by the EPP and other conservative actors in the European Parliament centred on the following claims²¹:

1. Top-down approach: the NRL is a product of the "Brussels bubble" that fails to reflect citizens' expectations.
2. Economic setback: the NRL hinders development by restricting areas where economic activity can occur.

3. Closure of business opportunity in the agricultural sectors: the NRL will result in up to 10% of agricultural land being taken out of production. As a result, farmers are expected to lose income due to reduced production, and fishing will face limitations.
4. Procedural issues: NRL's implementation will be complicated, leading to additional bureaucratic challenges.
5. Property rights: NRL infringes upon property rights.

While point (1) is political in nature and legitimately reflects the perception of a share of the European electorate, other claims are factually inaccurate. In this regard, 6,000 scientists jointly signed an open letter refuting the main false claims. The letter, equipped with supporting evidence, tackled every claim supported by the EPP groups and other actors opposing the NRL, and emphasised how such claims not only failed to provide scientific evidence, but also contradicted existing data²². The scientific community, however, was not the only actor to rise in support of the NRL against protests. Civil society organisations and environmental groups have come together to launch campaigns aimed at spreading accurate information on NRL, educating the public against misinformation and encouraging it to support the NRL. These involved petitions and email campaigns to MEPs, showing strong public backing and challenging the notion of a lack of popular legitimacy²³. This trans-actor alliance serves as a noteworthy example of collaboration in addressing misinformation, with scientific evidence supported by civil society initiative. The path of the NRL, however, remained a bumpy road. Eventually, the reactions triggered by the misinformation campaign

in opposition to the law led to further dilution and delays. After months of political deadlock, the European Parliament endorsed the final compromise text in February 2024 (329 votes in favour), and the Council gave the regulation its formal green light in June 2024. The regulation was then published in the *Official Journal* at the end of July 2024 and entered into force on 18 August 2024, making it directly applicable across member states. Implementation now shifts to national delivery: member states are required to prepare national restoration plans developed transparently with public and stakeholder participation, and submit draft plans to the Commission by September 2026, alongside monitoring and reporting obligations supported by the European Environment Agency and Commission reporting to the co-legislators.

Why misinformation happened: the NRL became vulnerable to misinformation because it combined high policy complexity with high perceived distributional stakes. Restoration targets, implementation sequencing and sectoral

implications are technically dense and easy to reframe as blunt “land-use restrictions” or “top-down Brussels impositions”. At the same time, the file landed in a politically polarised moment in which parts of the centre-right sought to reposition on the EGD, creating incentives to overstate costs and administrative burdens. This created an information vacuum in which simplified claims about “taking land out of production”, property rights and bureaucratic overload travelled faster than the anyway complex legal text, impact evidence and safeguards, especially in social strata where trust in EU institutions and environmental regulation was already contested.

This case demonstrates the significant impact of collaborative efforts among non-governmental organisations, scientists and informed citizens, especially when combined with proactive science communication and rapid fact-checking.

CASE STUDY 2: THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP) AND FARMERS' PROTESTS

In February 2024, Brussels was shaken by farmers' protests, with 900 tractors taking to the streets of the Belgian capital in a striking protest against the CAP. Established in 1962, the CAP is one of the EU's oldest common policies. Its original goals were to increase agricultural productivity, ensure a fair standard of living for farmers, stabilise markets, guarantee food security and provide affordable food for consumers. The 2023-2027 CAP introduces a new delivery model in which member states design national strategic plans under EU oversight, with a stronger focus on sustainability, climate action, generational renewal and innovation. While eco-schemes and conditionality aim to align subsidies with environmental and climate goals, critics argue that the CAP still disproportionately benefits large landowners and falls short on biodiversity and climate ambition, whereas farmers' unions emphasise the need to balance these objectives with income security and competitiveness. This tension triggered a wave of protests that shook both Brussels and cities in member states and prolonged into 2024.

The triggers of the protests varied significantly across countries, though three themes were common:

1. pressure on farm revenues;
2. stricter environmental regulations;
3. concerns about unfair trade competition.

In Germany, proposed cuts to fuel subsidies were a major catalyst; in the Netherlands and Flanders, nitrogen emission reduction rules sparked outrage; while in Spain, France and Greece, drought-related restrictions on water use were central. Elsewhere, farmers protested against import competition, for example, from Ukrainian grain in Poland and Bulgaria, or the EU-MERCOSUR trade deal in

Belgium and France. Beyond the EU, Swiss farmers protested rising costs and unstable support, while UK farmers voiced frustration with post-Brexit trade deals. Beneath these immediate issues lay deeper systemic concerns: volatile and low farm incomes; rising input costs; power imbalances with retailers; and the cumulative burden of bureaucratic and environmental requirements, all aggravated by draughts, inflation and the war in Ukraine. These pressures were particularly acute for small farms and those poorly positioned to adapt to regulatory change.

A research consortium comprising Science Feedback, Newtral, the European Fact-Checking Standards Network and the European Climate Foundation found that 81.6% of the most popular online posts related to farmers' protests originated from far-right politicians²⁴. These posts predominantly emphasised anti-EU climate action narratives while concealing Eurosceptic views. In this case, notably, social media functioned as the main interface through which both misinformation and strategically produced disinformation travelled, scaling grievance narratives faster than institutional clarification could keep up.

However, political responses were swift at both national and EU levels. Governments made concessions, such as Germany retracting fuel subsidy cuts, while the EU tightened restrictions on Ukrainian imports and even withdrew major proposals like the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation, which had faced strong farmer opposition. Other farm-to-fork initiatives, including animal welfare legislation and a framework law on sustainable food systems, were delayed or abandoned. This shift, we argue, signals a broader policy reorientation from sustainability objectives to food security and competitiveness. Farmers, however, remain dissatisfied, with lingering distrust in political institutions, despite these concessions.

Why misinformation happened: CAP-related misinformation escalated because protests emerged from real, accumulated pressures (income volatility, rising inputs, market power imbalances and administrative load), while policy responsibility was diffuse at the EU and national levels. This combination makes attribution hard (“who is doing what, and why?”) and opens space for narratives that personalise blame and compress multiple grievances into an abstract single target (often “Brussels” or “the EGD”). Social media then acted as the main interface that rewarded high-emotion, identity-based framings over evidence-based debate on policy detail, enabling political actors to package legitimate concerns about fairness and competitiveness into misleading claims about welfare losses, punitive environmental conditionality or “unfair” trade decisions. In short: structural insecurity plus complex governance plus

high-salience mobilisation created ideal conditions for mis- and disinformation to scale.

In contrast to the NRL, farmers’ mobilisations had a significant negative impact, resulting in delays to the EGD legislation and making several provisions related to the CAP less ambitious or less prescriptive²⁵. However, there were also positive practices and lessons from which we can learn. Notably, the European Commission made a concerted effort to build trust and highlight the positive effects of the measures through “positive communication campaigns” aimed at debunking misinformation. This initiative included the “Strategic Dialogue” initiative, regular updates in the analytical report named “Vision for Agriculture” and the creation of a consensus report²⁶.

CASE STUDY 3: THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL (EGD)

The EGD, introduced in 2019, is the EU's strategy to reach climate neutrality by 2050 and cut greenhouse-gas emissions by 55% by 2030. It combines legislation, investment and reform across energy, transport, industry, food and biodiversity, supported by tools such as the European Climate Law, the Fit for 55 package and the Just Transition Mechanism. While it strengthens the EU's role as a global climate leader and aims to align competitiveness with sustainability, implementation has faced criticism and pushback, particularly from farmers and industry groups concerned about costs, externalities and their uneven distribution.

The farmer protests of 2023-2024 marked one of the most visible waves of grassroots resistance to the EGD. While the immediate grievances varied by country, ranging from the removal of fuel subsidies in Germany to stricter nitrogen regulations in the Netherlands and Flanders, across Europe the protests crystallised around three dominant narratives: economic survival; unfair competition; and regulatory overreach. In fostering a climate of unrest, a series of false beliefs rapidly spread across the discursive sphere opposing the EGD²⁷. The most popular ones include:

1. Decrease in incomes: farmers' incomes have decreased due to measures related to the green transition.
2. Welfare deterioration: the welfare they receive through the CAP has declined because of the EGD.
3. Foreign policy interferences: positive trade measures to support imports from Ukraine are detrimental to their businesses.
4. Culture war/moral panic: the EGD pushes citizens to consume insects or lab-grown ("synthetic") meat.
5. Property rights' expropriation scare: thousands of farms are at risk of expropriation by the EU or national governments.
6. Prosperity-versus-green false trade-off: climate policies are ultimately hindering member states' economic prosperity.

Farmers' unions and associations argued that rising input costs, inflation and volatile markets were squeezing incomes, while the EGD added additional compliance burdens²⁸. These protests also symbolically reflected farmers' sense of marginalisation and lack of recognition within European societies²⁹.

Within these broader frames, the protests became a high-salience information event: social media acted as the main interface through which climate policy claims circulated, often detached from the actual design of EU measures. Fact-checking networks documented how misleading narratives, such as alleged EU plans to ban meat and dairy, "force" synthetic foods, or seize farmland for rewilding, were amplified by political entrepreneurs and obstructionist actors to mobilise anger and erode trust in EU climate action³⁰. In Poland and elsewhere, this translated into sovereignty and security framing ("green poison"), presenting environmental regulation as an existential threat rather than a negotiable policy package.

Why misinformation happened: The EGD attracted misinformation because it is an umbrella strategy

that touches almost every sector and household, making it uniquely exposed to “prosperity-versus-green” framing and culture-war mobilisation. The transition inevitably involves visible short-term adjustments and contested trade-offs, while many benefits (risk reduction, avoided damages, energy security) are longer term and less tangible, an asymmetry that makes cost narratives sticky. This is amplified by uneven exposure across regions and sectors, which creates genuine fairness anxieties that can be exploited through simplified narratives about bans, coercion and loss of sovereignty. Finally, the EGD became a symbolic proxy for broader political conflict in Europe, so misinformation served as a tool not only to contest specific measures, but to delegitimise the EU’s capacity to govern the transition at all.

Crucially, the information dynamics combined two mechanisms: the circulation of false or distorted claims about policy content; and the delegitimisation of institutional communication itself through accusations that official information is deceptive or fabricated, regardless of its accuracy³². For policymakers, the implication is straightforward: countering climate misinformation cannot rely on late-stage rebuttals alone. It requires proactive, trusted communication on costs and fairness, rapid response capacity in high-attention moments, and longer-term resilience measures (including media and information literacy) to reduce susceptibility to mobilisation by misrepresentation.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Across the EGD, CAP and NRL, a basic distinction must be upheld: democratic dissent is not the same as misinformation. Criticism and contestation are legitimate features of pluralist politics. They reflect real distributional tensions, competing priorities and lived experiences, especially in sectors under pressure from volatility, inflation and structural change, and they must be addressed politically through credible policy choices, sustained multilateral dialogue and long-term strategic engagement. For the progressive family, this means advancing a shared project for a fair transition. By recognising trade-offs, progressives can deliver tangible protections and speak convincingly to citizens' concerns about costs, jobs, and security.

Misinformation, by contrast, corrodes the conditions for democratic decision-making. It distorts policy debates by substituting evidence and scientific knowledge with misleading or fabricated claims, and by eroding trust in institutions and expertise. In the context of the climate crisis, misinformation and disinformation pose a direct threat to the EU's capacity to act at the speed and scale required. Preventing climate policy misinformation is therefore central to the progressive agenda because the transition depends on public trust, informed consent and durable coalitions for policies that are both ambitious and socially just. Without information integrity, climate action becomes easier to block, harder to implement and less equitable in its outcomes.

Misinformation is often entangled with organised interests, partisan incentives and wider agendas that seek to reshape the terms of the debate. For progressive actors, this means that an effective response cannot be limited to "correcting facts" after the damage is done. It must also strengthen the capacity to

build broad, durable coalitions around a just transition, anchored in credible policy delivery and sustained relationships with affected sectors and communities. The farmers' protests of 2023-2024 underline a central vulnerability of the EGD agenda: widely shared perceptions of unfairness in how costs, benefits and responsibilities are distributed. These concerns require political engagement, not dismissal. When distributional anxieties are ignored or answered only with abstract appeals to the common good, they can harden into resentment and become fertile ground for misleading narratives and strategic manipulation. A progressive approach should therefore combine rapid rebuttal capacity with proactive, targeted communication that speaks directly to fairness, livelihoods and competitiveness, and that is delivered through trusted intermediaries close to the communities most exposed. In practice, defending climate ambition and democratic trust depends on integrating information integrity with social justice: making the transition not only environmentally necessary, but visibly fair, protective and inclusive.

Progressive parties must engage in large-scale campaigns to pass on the message that the climate crisis itself poses risks far greater than those associated with the EGD. Yet rural actors are also deeply sensitive to broader dynamics of marginalisation that situate farmers' grievances within wider geographies of discontent that echo populist patterns across Europe³³. Reversing individual subsidy cuts is insufficient to address dissatisfaction. Instead, an inclusive and sensitive agricultural policy is needed, one that reduces bureaucratic burdens, recognises farmers' societal contributions and distributes the costs of sustainability transitions more fairly. Similarly, Europe requires a broad and inclusive debate on the future of food systems, moving beyond the false dichotomy of "food security versus sustainability"³⁴.

The farmers protests of 2023-2024 and similar mass-scale mobilisation about climate-related policies and the green transition, which entailed a significant amount of misinformation and disinformation, cannot be reduced to short-term reactions to individual regulations or to short-sightedness. They point instead to a broader crisis of legitimacy in agricultural and food policies (and perhaps, policies *tout court*), where both material pressures (income volatility, rising costs, regulatory burdens) and symbolic dimensions (feelings of marginalisation and unfair targeting) must be acknowledged.

The key policy lesson is that tackling discontent requires not only immediate policy adjustments but also structural reforms and a narrative of fairness, without which the EGD and sustainability ambitions risk being undermined.

Toolkit

	Policy action	Core idea	Key sources
Legislative measures	Financial transparency reforms	Reveals funding sources and networks behind disinformation campaigns	Farrell et al. (2019)
	Legislative and legal measures	Deploys legal tools and EU acts to sanction disinformation actors	Farrell et al. (2019)
Societal level	Public awareness campaigns	Raises citizen awareness with campaigns to promote evidence over falsehoods	Furegon (2022); Lewandowsky (2021)
	Independent fact-checking and research	Supports independent fact-checking and research to expose misinformation	Furegon (2022)
	Platform accountability and regulation	Holds online platforms accountable through transparency and regulation	Bleyer-Simon (2021); De Gregorio and Pollicino (2024); Furegon (2022)
Individual level	Targeted inoculation or prebunking campaigns	Warns about disinformation techniques in advance to build resistance	Farrell et al. (2019); Lewandowsky (2021); Basol et al. (2020)
	Media and news literacy education	Teaches citizens, especially students, to critically assess news and sources	Furegon (2022); Lewandowsky (2021);

Based on the cases at hand and grounded in an in-depth literature review on policy-related misinformation and disinformation, we developed a toolkit of policy actions and best practices to tackle

misinformation and improve policy communication. The toolkit provides an overview of interventions, highlighting both shared approaches and gaps across cases.

Legislative-level measures provide the formal backbone for tackling misinformation. Legal tools and frameworks, such as targeted lawsuits or the Digital Services Act, allow authorities to sanction actors engaged in large-scale disinformation campaigns³⁵, and therefore, to target the main interfaces between institutions and audiences (and institutions and citizens). In addition, financial transparency reforms address the roots of disinformation by requiring disclosure of funding sources, lobbying expenditures and donor identities. These reforms expose the financial networks that sustain strategic disinformation efforts, allowing policymakers to intervene more effectively³⁶.

Societal-level measures aim to strengthen collective resilience. Public awareness campaigns raise recognition of the dangers of misinformation, whether through social media or targeted initiatives linked to specific policy. These efforts encourage citizens to value reliable data and evidence over misleading narratives³⁷. Independent fact-checking and academic research also play a central role at this level. Supporting factcheckers and researchers ensures that the techniques, networks and impacts of misinformation are systematically investigated, with findings made accessible to the public to reinforce transparency and accountability³⁸. At the same time, holding platforms accountable is crucial. Frameworks that increase transparency about algorithms and political advertising, while also moderating harmful content, can limit the spread of misinformation. Such frameworks should include robust internal and external scrutiny and regular public reporting³⁹.

Individual-level measures focus on building resilience among citizens by raising awareness and discouraging misinformative action. One approach is inoculation or prebunking campaigns, which consist of ex-ante information efforts that warn

people about common disinformation techniques, such as the use of fake experts, and directly debunk misleading content before it spreads. The aim is to build psychological resistance and strengthen trust in reliable sources⁴⁰. However, experts increasingly debate the effectiveness of inoculation, as this practice bears the risk of fostering scepticism on a broader societal level. Media and news literacy education also plays a critical role at the individual level. By integrating critical thinking and media literacy skills into school curricula, as well as lifelong-learning structures, citizens learn to evaluate sources using criteria such as IMVAIN (independent, multiple, verified, authoritative and named), thereby strengthening their ability to identify misinformation⁴¹. Consensus messaging further supports individual resilience by highlighting scientific agreement on contested issues, such as open letters signed by thousands of scientists, which serve as a reliable entry point for building acceptance of evidence-based perspectives. Closely related is culturally aligned messaging, which tailors communication to the values of different cultural or ideological groups, reducing defensive reactions and suspicion among audiences who might otherwise reject information that challenges their worldview⁴³.

Together, these legislative, societal and individual measures constitute a comprehensive toolkit for addressing policy-related misinformation. While each has strengths and limitations, taken together, they provide a multi-level approach to strengthening resilience and improving the communication of European policies.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the EGD, CAP and NRL shows that misinformation represents a growing challenge not only to effective policy making, but also to democratic legitimacy itself. While dissent and criticism remain legitimate and vital elements of democratic contestation, misinformation actively undermines evidence-based debate and erodes trust in institutions. The cases demonstrate that progressive forces cannot afford to limit their response to reactive debunking or short-term concessions. Instead, they must build long-term resilience through a multi-level strategy, combining legislative safeguards, societal resilience and

individual empowerment. At the same time, fairness must remain central to the progressive agenda. Addressing citizens' material grievances, strengthening recognition of their contributions and fostering inclusive debates on Europe's future are essential to prevent misinformation from taking root. The policy lesson is clear: only by pairing robust counter-misinformation strategies with a credible narrative of justice and inclusion can progressives both defend the EGD and renew public trust in the European project, promoting a sustainable future that safeguards the environmental, economic and social pillars of Europe.

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The Olof Palme International Center is the Swedish labour movement’s umbrella organisation for international solidarity. The organisation work globally for democracy, human rights, social justice, peace and sustainability through a just transition – in the spirit of Olof Palme – and supports progressive social movements and parties that change societies and people’s everyday lives.



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Eteron, the Institute for Research and Social Change, is a non-profit organisation based in Athens, Greece, that produces knowledge, contributes towards citizen empowerment and promotes partnerships. The institute strives to strengthen arguments, ideas, people and organisations, in order to reach a society, in which the actual needs of the people will be at the center of the public debate. With credible research, analysis, articles and public events, Eteron has become a collaborations’ hub among research institutions abroad, bringing the international discussion in Greece and promoting the discussion regarding Greece abroad.



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The increasing spread of misinformation has become a significant challenge to the implementation and public reception of EU policies, particularly in climate-related areas. This policy brief explores the intersection of misinformation and policy communication, focusing on the Common Agricultural Policy. The brief aims to investigate how misinformation shapes public perceptions and resistance to climate policies and to develop strategic recommendations for more effective policy communication. Utilising case study analysis, the research will provide actionable insights for EU policymakers.

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