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Immediate Release

New initiative uses data science to confront the growing peril of disinformation

The OECD Open Government Unit and The GovLab are helping identify societal questions whose answers lie in the right data.

BROOKLYN, New York, June 4, 2020—Today, [The Governance Lab](#) (The GovLab) at the NYU Tandon School of Engineering announced a partnership with the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) that will focus on addressing a topic of growing public concern: disinformation.

The new collaboration is part of [The 100 Questions Initiative](#), an effort to identify the most important societal questions for which greater access to data and data science methods could find answers; in our current climate, some of the most pressing questions involve the spread of deceptive or unproven information.

The role of disinformation is well-documented; it played a role in the [2016 U.S. presidential election](#), [violence in Myanmar](#), the growth of the [anti-vaxx movement](#), and the [panic around the 2019–2020 coronavirus outbreak](#). Amid increasing awareness of the destructive role it can play, governments, academics, and corporations have sought to better understand disinformation’s origins and consequences, as well as to develop responses to it.

“The spread of false or misleading information can be extremely disruptive. We’ve seen the harm it can do to people around the globe, whether they are looking for information about public health, trying to engage in democratic processes, or simply going about their lives in this increasingly connected era,”

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said [Stefaan Verhulst](#), co-founder and chief research and development officer of The GovLab. “To meaningfully and responsibly address misinformation, we need to identify the most pressing research questions so we can start allocating resources to answer them.”

As with previously launched [focus areas](#) of The 100 Questions Initiative, unlocking the value of data to address public problems begins by soliciting the expertise of “[bilinguals](#)” – individuals who possess both knowledge about a given topical domain and data science expertise. They will work collaboratively to identify the 10 most pressing, high-impact questions on disinformation answerable through new and existing data sources and methods. These submissions will subsequently be made available for public voting, as was done with the [migration domain](#) and with the [gender domain](#).

“Governments’ responses to disinformation are rapidly evolving and adapting to an extremely volatile and uncertain environment,” said Alessandro Bellantoni, Acting Head of the Open and Innovative Government Division (OIG), Public Governance Directorate at the OECD. “The urgency of countering this phenomenon, and of responding to wider changes in the communication and media environment, means that we are seeing a wave of policies and measures being introduced and tested across the OECD and beyond. To tackle disinformation, governments will need sound evidence and data to develop solutions that go beyond regulation and effectively address this persistent challenge.”

The OECD is gathering evidence on the ways in which governments are responding to disinformation and using communication to increase citizens’ trust and participation. They will use that evidence to develop holistic approaches to combat disinformation, including elements of better communication, media literacy, and support for the media.

OECD joins the [International Organization for Migration](#), [European Commission](#), [Data2X](#), [World Resources Institute](#) and the [Bertelsmann Foundation](#) in using The 100 Questions methodology to identify domain-specific questions. As with [migration](#), [gender](#), [air quality](#), and the [future of work](#), the efforts made in the domain of misinformation will ultimately facilitate data collaboratives—new forms of public-private partnerships that leverage data from different sectors for the public good.

Professionals interested in collaborating are encouraged to send an email to contact@the100questions.org. For more information about The 100 Questions Initiative, visit the100questions.org or contact Stefaan Verhulst at sverhulst@thegovlab.org.

About The 100 Questions Initiative

The 100 Questions Initiative is presented by The Governance Lab at the NYU Tandon School of Engineering with initial funding support from Schmidt Futures. It is supported by a global advisory board comprising data science and subject matter experts from the public, corporate, and non-profit sectors. Members include [Ciro Cattuto](#), scientific director of ISI Foundation; [Gabriella Gómez-Mont](#), founder and former director at Laboratorio Para La Ciudad; [Molly Jackman](#), leader of Content-Product Data Science and Engineering at Netflix; [Tom Kalil](#), Chief Innovation Officer at Schmidt Futures; [Vivienne Ming](#), founder of Socos Labs; [Wilfred Ndifon](#), director of research at AIMS Global Network; [Denice Ross](#), fellow at Georgetown University’s Beeck Center for Social Impact and Innovation; and [Matthew Salganik](#), professor of sociology at Princeton University. For more information, visit the100questions.org.

About The Governance Lab at the NYU Tandon School of Engineering

The Governance Lab's mission is to improve people's lives by changing the way we govern. Our goal at The GovLab is to strengthen the ability of institutions — including but not limited to governments — and people to work more openly, collaboratively, effectively, and legitimately to make better decisions and solve public problems. We believe that increased availability and use of data, new ways to leverage the capacity, intelligence, and expertise of people in the problem-solving process, combined with new advances in technology and science, can transform governance. We approach each challenge and opportunity in an interdisciplinary, collaborative way, irrespective of the problem, sector, geography, and level of government. For more information, visit thegovlab.org.

About the OECD

Working with over 100 countries, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is a global policy forum that promotes policies to improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. The OECD Open and Innovative Government Division supports governments in the design and implementation of policies to promote open, digital and innovative public sectors by exploring new approaches and tools, providing evidence-based analysis and sharing actionable recommendations.

About the New York University Tandon School of Engineering

The NYU Tandon School of Engineering dates to 1854, the founding date for both the New York University School of Civil Engineering and Architecture and the Brooklyn Collegiate and Polytechnic Institute (widely known as Brooklyn Poly). A January 2014 merger created a comprehensive school of education and research in engineering and applied sciences, rooted in a tradition of invention and entrepreneurship and dedicated to furthering technology in service to society. In addition to its main location in Brooklyn, NYU Tandon collaborates with other schools within NYU, one of the country's foremost private research universities, and is closely connected to engineering programs at NYU Abu Dhabi and NYU Shanghai. It operates Future Labs focused on start-up businesses in downtown Manhattan and Brooklyn and an award-winning online graduate program. For more information, visit <http://engineering.nyu.edu>.

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