

## **PUBLIC AUTHORITIES' OBLIGATION AND POSSIBILITIES TO RECTIFY INCORRECT INFORMATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In our article, we examine what kind of obligations and possibilities public authorities have in rectifying incorrect information. Meanwhile previous research has shown the importance of debunking incorrect information, and governments have presented different types of guidelines for public authorities to rectify incorrect information in practice. The term incorrect information has been used in variety of situations to describe different types of false and misleading information. In this article, we use the term to describe misleading information and information produced by information influence activities. The data used in our research was collected in security cafes organized across Finland. Overall 50 public authorities, representing different organizations, participated in the cafes. Security cafe data consists of conversations and forms filled by the participants. Collected data was analyzed using inductive content analysis.

Based on our research, public authorities have a comprehensive understanding of their obligations and possibilities to rectify incorrect information. The difficulties lie in identifying the incorrect information and in forming an overall picture across different organizations as well as in taking the correct measures to rectify incorrect information. In Finland, legislation does not significantly restrict the dissemination of incorrect information, except for illegal content. Despite of this, public authorities have a legal obligation to distribute timely and reliable information in order to prevent the spread of incorrect information. Rectifying incorrect information is necessary to maintain credibility and trust in the public authorities in the constantly changing information environment.

### **KEYWORDS**

public authorities; disinformation; information environment; incorrect information; legislation

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