

# Mistra Environmental Communication – Strategic Reserve

## Special call: Disinformation in environmental communication

In recent years, disinformation and its impacts on societal and political decision-making and structures have received significant attention. Disinformation can be understood as “false information deliberately and often covertly spread in order to influence public opinion or obscure the truth” (Merriam-Webster). Disinformation is thus conceptually different from misunderstandings or incorrect information that is spread unintentionally.

Disinformation is, at its core, a communication issue: it aims to construct and share meanings and interpretations of the world in an instrumental way, ultimately with the aim to provoke a certain behavioural or societal response, resulting in, for example, the destabilisation of existing societal structures. Disinformation, in an age where information is a central (economic) good to which digital and online media seem to offer nearly unlimited access, has become a powerful way to exert power. Governmental initiatives such as the Swedish authority for psychological defense demonstrate the important role that information, including false and misleading information, is perceived to have in the context of both national security and international relations.

Disinformation is also relevant to environmental and sustainability communication, as major transformation challenges such as climate change, environmental health and the transition to a low carbon economy rise on the political agenda.

The Mistra Environmental Communication programme board now invites all programme partners to apply for funding for **additional work that explores and elucidates the role of disinformation in environmental communication**. Projects could consist of new research, review and synthesis of existing research, or research communication activities. Applications should aim to bring programme partners together, strengthen the visibility of the programme, and/or attempt to involve or reach new groups and audiences. Projects may focus on Sweden, but also be of international, perhaps comparative, character. They should be designed in a way that allows all programme partners to benefit from the findings or outputs.

We are open to a wide range of perspectives and focal points related to the topic of the call such as:

- Governmental, institutional, educational or individual efforts to identify and deal with disinformation and fake news, e.g., 'källkritik' (the critical evaluation of sources)
- The dynamics of constructing, spreading, managing and controlling false information
- The notion that disinformation is necessarily deliberate
- Tensions between epistemological subjectivism and strategies to manage and control disinformation
- Tension between the management of disinformation and freedom of speech/expression, also in contexts of dialogue and participatory processes
- Trends towards increased transparency in environmental communication and the role of disinformation
- Disinformation in environmental political debate, e.g., in the run up to the Swedish elections
- The role and agency of researchers and other environmental communication practitioners as brokers and bearers of different knowledges and scientific evidence in a stress field of competing knowledge claims and disinformation

The overall amount of funding available under this call is 1.4 million SEK.

All partners participating in Mistra Environmental Communication (Mistra EC) may seek funding from its strategic reserve. The main purpose of the strategic reserve is to support activities that expand and/or enhance Mistra EC in strategic and innovative ways.

As a partner, you can apply together with other partners, and/or with actors who are currently not partners in Mistra EC. To strengthen cooperation within the programme, at least two organizations (including the main applicant) must participate. Applications are submitted to the programme directors, and the deciding body is the Mistra EC programme board. We now invite applications for work addressing the topic above by **Friday, 6th May 2022**.

The general conditions for Mistra funding (e.g., concerning overhead rates) apply.