

Spanish-language Climate Disinformation Policy Recommendations [2023]

THE PROBLEM

As of 2021, nearly [500](#) million people around the world speak Spanish as their native language. Yet, there are clear [enforcement disparities](#) in the way social media companies are moderating disinformation, hate speech, and other harmful content in English compared to Spanish. Facebook, for instance, has been found to spend [87%](#) of its misinformation budget on U.S. content, with less of an emphasis on flagging non-English and foreign content.

An October 2022 [report](#) from GreenLatinos and Friends of the Earth details how online climate disinformation is reaching Spanish-speaking communities in the U.S., mapping main actors and the strategies they use to spread false climate content. Main offenders are found to be primarily operating outside of the U.S. in Latin America and Spain, routinely amplifying and duplicating existing climate disinformation content in English and translating it into Spanish. As observed with climate disinformation in English, actors were also noted to be primarily engaging with a broader right-wing agenda rather than exclusively sharing climate disinformation content. Deliberate attempts are also made to avoid content moderation by directing audiences to accounts on less-moderated platforms and using coded language to evade moderation.

As such, Spanish-speaking communities in the U.S. and around the world are increasingly susceptible to receiving and resharing mis- and disinformation. Ensuring this community has access to verified and reliable information on the climate crisis across the social media platforms that many rely on for news is essential to their health, safety, and well-being. This is particularly important in preparation for increasing disaster events, heat waves, and other climate-induced risks that often disproportionately affect many who belong to the Spanish-speaking community. With Latinos additionally comprising the [2nd fastest voting bloc](#) in the U.S., access to accurate information will be crucial ahead of 2024. Social media platforms must take far greater steps to treat this group equally, and protect an already-vulnerable community by mitigating the spread of climate disinformation.

THE SOLUTION

There are clear actions that policymakers could take to hold social media companies accountable for the spread of climate disinformation in Spanish across their platforms. Similar to [broader](#) recommendations by the [Climate Action Against Disinformation](#) coalition, these actions include requiring social media companies to:

- Develop company-wide plans and procedures to halt the spread of disinformation by creating:
 - Community content standards,
 - An enforcement mechanism for violation of the standards,
 - and a robust public input mechanism for content flagging.
- Dedicate resources to fluent Spanish-speaking staff to help monitor content and identify repeat offenders. Companies should publicly disclose hiring procedures and resource allocation per language and country, and any per-user benchmarks.
- Disclose mitigation measures in place to reduce climate and other disinformation in Spanish, as well as the results of these measures, and any fact-checking processes.
- Disclose progress on removal of climate disinformation in Spanish, and disclose fact-checking processes and mitigation measures in place with Spanish-speaking moderators.
- Allow for researcher access to internal data, particularly those in Spanish-speaking countries with respect to Spanish disinformation.
- Prohibit the use of monetized advertisements and content targeting related to climate disinformation.
- Develop plans to educate Spanish-speakers both in and outside of the U.S. on understanding the dangers of disinformation, how to identify disinformation online, avoid further sharing of disinformation, and intent behind content moderation.
- Adopt a [definition](#) of climate disinformation.

In addition to holding platforms accountable via the recommendations listed above, Congressional Hispanic Caucus leadership should also consider undertaking the following:

- Advance [efforts](#) to combat Spanish-language misinformation by sending further [letters](#) to key platform CEOs requesting meetings and action addressing Spanish-language climate disinformation.

- Meet with platform CEOs to discuss their plans to moderate false Spanish-language content and mitigate the spread of climate disinformation, and to share research found in [Los Eco-Ilógicos](#).
- Cosponsor legislation as introduced/reintroduced to hold tech companies accountable, including the Digital Services Oversight and Safety Act ([DSOSA](#)), [Social Media DATA Act](#), Platform Accountability & Transparency Act ([PATA](#)), American Data Privacy and Protection Act ([ADPPA](#)), and [Algorithmic Justice and Online Platform Transparency Act](#) or similar legislation.
- ENC members of the CHC may consider hosting another briefing with platform CEOs on their role in promoting climate disinformation, highlighting the environmental justice concerns (*below*) associated with Spanish-language disinformation.

Lastly, the CHC could encourage the Biden administration to undertake further actions to combat the spread of climate disinformation. The newly established Office of Environmental Justice could undertake disinformation as an angle of interest by supporting individual lawsuits against tech companies for poor climate information practices, particularly given that access to accurate information ahead of increasing climate-induced risks will be critical for members of the Spanish-speaking community. Additionally, the Federal Trade Commission could seek information from platforms regarding their approach to climate change disinformation to prepare a public-facing report regarding policies, practices, and results addressing disinformation.