

Lightning Country Snapshot - Lithuania

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Recent national crisis where science communication failed/was insufficient

The "Sputnik V" Interpretation incident (February – May 2021)

- Following the publication of high efficacy results for the Russian "Sputnik V" vaccine in *The Lancet*, a communication gap emerged between the scientific community and national security leadership.
 - Some researchers focused on the published peer-reviewed data, suggesting the vaccine was a viable tool for pandemic management.
 - The Lithuanian government classified the **vaccine as a "geopolitical weapon"** used for hybrid influence, deciding not to include it in the national portfolio regardless of European Medicines Agency approval.

The suspension of the AstraZeneca (later renamed Vaxzevria) vaccine (March 16, 2021)

On the evening of March 16, 2021, Lithuanian Minister of Health, based on the recommendation of the State Medicines Control Service, announced a temporary suspension of the AstraZeneca vaccine. The decision was taken as a precautionary measure following reports of rare blood clotting disorders in other EU countries. The suspension created "information chaos" that reinforced doubts, especially among older age groups. A **two-day delay in scientific response allowed misinformation to settle in** before experts could provide a unified message

One science communication success story

**Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (LMA) Experts Advise Initiative: reliable source of information
(2020–2022)**

The LMA website published science-based information related to COVID-19

By delivering accessible, scientific evidence-based insights, the Experts Advise Initiative became a counterweight to COVID-19 disinformation. These science-driven publications served as a definitive resource for both the general public and national media outlets

Main actors responsible for communicating scientific evidence to the public during crises

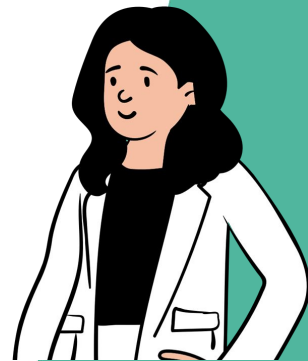
Lead Ministry determined by the crisis type approach

During the pandemic, the Ministry of Health acted as the primary coordinator, integrating medical and life sciences experts directly into crisis management ad hoc task forces.

Lithuanian Academy of Sciences

During the pandemic, the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences played a key role in providing scientific evidence to the wider public

Take away messages



- **Science** communication in a crisis must account for the broader context (geopolitical and security landscape) to maintain **public credibility**
- **Science is a process**, so during crises it is necessary to manage uncertainty and information gaps until definitive data is available



Thank you!

Sample text